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THE PROPHET ELIJAH IN THE LITERATURE OF THE SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD: THE GROWTH OF A TRADITION

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BY
BRENDA J. SHAVER

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols., ed. D. N. Freedman. New York: Doubleday, 1992
AEL	*Ancient Egyptian Literature*, M. Lichtheim. 3 vols. Berkeley, 1971-80
ANET	*Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed., J. B. Pritchard. Princeton, 1969
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford, 1907
BZAW	Beihefte zur *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
BZNW	Beihefte zur *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
DDD	*Dictionary of Dieties and Demons in the Bible*, 2d ed.; ed. K. van der Toorn, B. Becking and P. W. van der Horst. Leiden: Brill, 1999
FOTL	Forms of Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTP	*Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols., ed. J. H. Charlesworth. Doubleday: Garden City, NY, 1983-87
RevQ	*Revue de Qumran*
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature: Septuagint and Cognate Studies

SBLSS	Society of Biblical Literature: Semeia Studies
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1964-76
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*
ZThK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

INTRODUCTION

The prophet Elijah is an important figure in Jewish tradition. In rabbinical literature Elijah plays a prominent role.[1] He will come to bring peace and to resolve all *halakhic* disputes. Rabbis and pious men were considered to have been guided by him in their studies. He is precursor and active partner of the Messiah. On account of his burning zeal for the Lord he is identified with Aaron's grandson Phinehas. In various guises he appears as the redeemer and the helper of the poor and the hopeless. In Jewish mysticism Elijah is regarded as a supernatural being not born of a woman. He is an angel descended from heaven for the purpose of being useful to humankind and a teacher of Kabbalah. In Jewish folklore Elijah is a favorite hero. He combats social injustice, helps the poor and turns against the proud and the oppressors. A place is always set for him at the Seder table. He is a protector of the newborn, and the "Chair of Elijah" is a fixture at circumcisions. Although the present study does not focus on these later traditions about Elijah, it is important nonetheless to begin with this thumbnail sketch as it clearly reveals the extraordinary diversity of characterizations of the prophet and the lively expectations that continued to surround his future manifestation. Indeed, a future perspective marks the entire

[1] See the section on Elijah in vol. 4 of L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1913) 195-235.

tradition about Elijah. The reason that the prophet can be expected to provide deliverance, inspiration, wisdom or protection is ultimately due to the biblical legend in which Elijah never experienced death but ascended straightaway into heaven.

Some of the post-biblical characterizations of the prophet show a direct correspondence to the stories about him found in the book of Kings, while other characteristics and roles attributed to him are not to be found in the Elijah narratives at all. The handful of stories about Elijah that have been preserved for us in the Hebrew scriptures present him as a highly charismatic figure. He makes his first appearance in the Bible abruptly and without preparation (1 Kgs 17:1). He confronts the kings of Israel with condemnation for religious infidelity and for social injustices (1 Kgs 18:18; 21:20-22; 2 Kgs 1:16). The Elijah stories are narrated with lots of color and bravado through the use of common folkloristic motifs, such as the ability to control the weather, call down fire from heaven, multiply food and raise the dead to life. The prophet is fiercely zealous for the Lord and slaughters 450 prophets of Baal to prove it (1 Kgs 18:40). Not even Elisha seems to possess such an intense passion for the Lord as his predecessor. After a turbulent career, Elijah disappears mysteriously in a fiery chariot into the sky (2 Kgs 2:11).

Despite the prophet's powerful persona in the book of Kings, Elijah is only mentioned twice more in the Hebrew scriptures. His name appears once in the book of Chronicles (2 Chr 21:12-15) and again at the very end of the book of Malachi (Mal 3:23-24). The passage in Malachi is a critical one because it contains the announcement of Elijah's return to earth before the Day of YHWH comes. This is the crucial juncture where everything changes. A typological shift has occurred between the portrayal of Elijah in the Kings narratives and his depiction

in the book of Malachi. No longer is Elijah a prophet of the past who worked great deeds for the nation long ago. He is now a prophet for the future and one who will play a vital role in the coming time of judgment. The prophecy in Malachi is the textual source of all the later traditions concerning the eschatological Elijah. Yet, as we shall see, the Malachi text is sufficiently ambiguous to allow for the plethora of reinterpretations that soon follow. The understanding of the future Elijah and his role for the end-time continues to grow and expand during the Second Temple period as other scriptural texts are read in conjunction with or in light of the obscure Malachi prophecy. Thus the main purpose of this study is to discuss the expansion of the tradition. Where do the novel elements in the tradition come from and what do they mean?

By the middle of the Second Temple period, belief in the prophet's return to earth is so firmly entrenched in the minds of all (or at least of the learned) that even Ben Sira, a sage who is wholly unconcerned with anything eschatological, can't help but acknowledge and praise Elijah's future role (Sir 48:10). The Qumran community, which looked forward to the arrival of numerous messianic figures in the end-time, also held out hope for the coming of Elijah explicitly (4Q558; 4Q521). The textual sources, then, that provide us with direct evidence for the expectation of Elijah and how his end-time role was understood are these: Mal 3:23-24, Sir 48:10-11, 4Q558 and 4Q521. Although the written sources are not plentiful, what can clearly be discerned from the evidence at hand is that the eschatological return of Elijah was a recognized teaching in prophetic, scribal, and apocalyptic circles during the Persian and Hellenistic periods. That the expectation of Elijah's return was certainly a popular one during this period can be seen from the responses of people at the time of Jesus, who were quick to

identify the Nazarene as Elijah or at least as "one of the prophets of old" (cf. Mk 6:14-15; 8:27-28; Mt 16:13-14; Lk 9:7-9, 18-19).

The understanding of Elijah's role in the end-time is significantly changed by the Christian gospel traditions, and this change has, in turn, significantly colored how most modern biblical scholars have interpreted the Elijah material in Jewish sources. Since early on in the twentieth century, the majority seems to have assumed that the belief in Elijah as forerunner of the Messiah was a Jewish one and was universal and widespread in Second Temple Judaism.[2] We are not talking here simply about the belief in Elijah's return to earth before the day of the Lord, but more specifically of the idea that he will be the forerunner or herald of the Messiah. There have, of course, been a few dissenting voices along the way – that is, those who have argued that the notion of Elijah as precursor of the Messiah is a Christian development because Jewish expectation centered on Elijah as forerunner of God not the Messiah.[3] Although it is not my foremost intention in this study to enter into this ongoing debate, my analysis of the Elijah

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[2] G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932) 2.357; G. Molin, "Elijahu der Prophet und sein Weiterleben in den Hoffnungen des Judentums und der Christenheit," *Judaica* 8 (1952) 79-80; S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh. The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1954) 299; J. Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel* (New York: Macmillan, 1955) 456; J. Jeremias, "Ἠλ(ε)ίας," in G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964) 2.931; G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973) 94-95; L. Ginzberg, *An Unknown Jewish Sect* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1976) 226-27, 250; E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (rev. and ed. by G. Vermes, F. Millar and M. Black; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: Clark, 1979) 515-16; D. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983) 125; D. C. Allison, "Elijah Must Come First," *JBL* 103 (1984) 256-58; J. Marcus, *The Way of the Lord* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992) 110; É. Puech, *La Croyance des Esséniens en la Vie Future: Immortalité, Résurrection, Vie Éternelle?* (Paris: Gabalda, 1993) 673-76.

[3] J. A. T. Robinson, "Elijah, John and Jesus: An Essay in Detection," *NTS* 4 (1958) 268-69; M. M. Faierstein, "Why Do the Scribes Say that Elijah Must Come First," *JBL* 100 (1981) 75-76; J. A. Fitzmyer, "More About Elijah Coming First," *JBL* 103 (1984) 295-96; and M. Öhler, *Elia im Neuen Testament* (BZNW 88; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997) 29.

texts will clearly demonstrate that the idea of Elijah as a forerunner of the Messiah was far from being universal and widespread in Second Temple Judaism. In absolutely none of the Elijah texts from this period is the eschatological prophet seen as a precursor to any figure, unless that figure is considered to be YHWH himself. Rather, the eschatological Elijah is consistently portrayed as a kind of messianic figure in his own right, serving as God's special agent in the end-time and performing a variety of restorative tasks on the deity's behalf.

The explicit and forceful identification of John the Baptist as Elijah in the New Testament Gospels has indeed affected how scholars have examined and understood the development of the Elijah tradition. Typically, no careful analysis is undertaken of the Elijah passages in any of the texts predating the Gospels. It is merely assumed that the forerunner idea was already in place and that the expression of this idea found its culmination in the early Christian literature. The first and most serious attempt at addressing the development of the Elijah tradition was by Joachim Jeremias in a thirteen-page article that appeared originally in 1935 in the *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament.*[4] Here Jeremias arranges his sources chronologically from the Hebrew Bible to the extra-biblical and rabbinic writings and on to the New Testament.[5] The obvious aim of the article is to trace the evolution of the Elijah material so that it can shed more light on our understanding of the prophet's role in the New Testament, which was Jeremias' true focus. On account of his methodology, however,

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[4] J. Jeremias, "Ἠλ(ε)ίας," in G. Kittel, ed., *TWNT* (Stuttgart, 1935). All page references to this article will be from the English translation already cited above.

[5] Jeremias seems to have regarded the traditions of the Rabbis as being quite old and, therefore, relevant for shedding light on our understanding of the NT texts/traditions.

Jeremias occasionally misreads or misrepresents the evidence. For example, in the section where he discusses Elijah's return, he begins by mentioning the role of Elijah as "the Messiah" in Mal 3:23-24 and Sir 48:10. Next, he states that another view of the prophet – one that saw Elijah as forerunner of the Messiah rather than of God – was far more widespread in post-biblical Judaism. He cites in support of how widespread this view was in popular eschatology several passages from the pseudepigrapha (*1 En.* 89:52; 90:31; *4 Ezra* 6:26), none of which actually portray Elijah as forerunner, a couple of passages from Justin (*Dial.* 8:4; 49:1), and the New Testament itself.[6] It hardly seems appropriate to describe the latter view as the more popular and widespread one in "later Judaism" (and hence, superceding the view of Elijah expressed in Malachi and Ben Sira) if the only valid evidence of it that exists is from early Christian sources.

Other scholars since Jeremias have discussed the development of the Elijah tradition, but they, too, have been concerned primarily with the New Testament and with the idea of Elijah as forerunner of the Messiah.[7] To my knowledge, there has not been a study to date that has closely examined the development of the Elijah tradition in the Second Temple period that has not had the elucidation of the writings of the Evangelists as its primary concern.

The purpose of this project, then, is to trace the development of the Elijah tradition during the Second Temple period and to explicate the novel elements that begin to appear along the way. We will be most concerned to analyze the

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[6] Jeremias, "Ἠλ(ε)ίας," 931. The passages from *1 Enoch* and *4 Ezra* clearly do not portray Elijah as a forerunner-figure. In fact, *1 En* 90:31 probably does not even allude to Elijah, but rather to an eschatological patriarch [cf. P. A. Tiller, *A Commentary on the Animal Apocalypse of 1 Enoch* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1993) 383-89]. *4 Ezra* 6:26 merely attests to the idea that Enoch and Elijah will return together, but not that they will precede the Messiah [cf. M. E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 172].

[7] For example, M. Öhler, *Elia im Neuen Testament*.

passages within their particular literary and historical contexts, being mindful not to read later ideas about the role of Elijah into them. The present study will also go beyond the earlier one done by Jeremias in another respect. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls provides us with a wealth of new evidence that necessarily requires us to reshape our understanding of Judaism in the Second Temple period. A close reading of those texts is now essential for any discussion of the eschatological prophet and the role that he is to play in the end-time.

The body of the dissertation is divided into four principal chapters. Each chapter discusses a different set of texts about Elijah in chronological order. The first chapter is devoted to an examination of the Elijah narratives in the book of Kings, specifically with the aim of better understanding the multi-faceted characterization of the prophet as a miracle worker, a zealot, a "second Moses," and a pronouncer of doom oracles. Particular attention is also paid to the genre of the narratives and the extent to which this material has been shaped by later redactors. These three characterizations of the prophet, and especially his ascension to heaven at the end of his earthly career, lay much of the groundwork for the understanding of Elijah that develops later on in the postexilic period, beginning with the prophecy in Malachi.

Chapter Two begins with a brief examination of the letter of Elijah to King Jehoram of Judah in 2 Chronicles 21:12-15. The focus of the chapter is mainly on the obscure and ambiguous prophecy in the book of Malachi which announces the imminent arrival of YHWH's "messenger/angel" in 3:1, who is later identified by the editor of the book as the prophet Elijah in 3:23-24. As mentioned above, this passage is the starting-point of all the later views of the eschatological Elijah and his mission. Thus, a very close reading of those few verses from Malachi occupies the bulk of this chapter. The questions with which

I am most concerned here are: 1) Why does the editor of the text identify YHWH's messenger from 3:1 as Elijah? In other words, what was it about Elijah's character that caused the editor to make this connection, and what was his interpretation or understanding of Malachi's original prophecy in 3:1 which prompted the association in the first place; and 2) What is Elijah's future task supposed to be? What does "to turn the heart of fathers to sons and sons to their fathers" mean in this context? Essentially, I will argue that Elijah is both prophet and angel and so he is uniquely suited to play the role of YHWH's מלאך. He will prepare the way for YHWH's arrival by announcing his imminent manifestation and by removing all obstacles from his path. The obstacle that stands in the way of the people's salvation is their sinfulness, at least according to the editor of the book. Elijah's role in the end-time is to bring the people back to God and to restore the covenant relationship. Elijah is their last hope. Only the people's response to his call to repent will avert God's wrath on the day of judgment.

In Chapter Three, the discussion moves to the topic of Ben Sira's praise of Elijah in Sir 48:1-11. The sage glorifies Elijah's zeal for YHWH and his working wonders in accordance with God's will. He touts the power of the prophet's words and his strong concern for the law and the covenant. What is of particular interest for us is what the sage had to say about the future Elijah at the end of the pericope. Here we find Ben Sira expanding the prophet's role in the end-time to include the restoration of the tribes of Israel. I will argue that this redemptive task involves not only the bringing back of all the exiled Israelites to their land, but also the act of bringing them back to God. Sirach's understanding of the eschatological Elijah is dependent on the Malachi prophecy and both texts portray the prophet's future role as one of calling the people to repentance.

Elijah's return to earth is also connected with the idea of resurrection in 48:11, although such a view cannot be attributed to Sirach himself.

Chapter Four treats the expectation of the eschatological Elijah in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Once again, the prophet's role in the end-time is expanded to include a variety of new tasks. I will argue here that 4Q521, the so-called "Messianic Apocalypse," presents Elijah in the characteristic role of herald, known from Malachi, and of miracle worker, known from the narratives in the book of Kings. He will be the agent of the resurrection and all heaven and earth will obey his commands. The text also speaks of the return of exiles, although it is God who will expressly perform this feat. Yet, perhaps God's agent (Elijah) who seems to work wonders on the deity's behalf throughout this fragmentary text might be seen as assisting with this redemptive task as well. Also discussed in this chapter is whether the Qumran texts attest to the beginning of the notion that Elijah will be the priestly messiah or High Priest for the end of days, a belief that shows up in a variety of later rabbinic sources.

Finally, the study concludes with a survey of the Elijah tradition in later Jewish and Christian literature. The purpose of this closing epilogue is to show the continuations or the ongoing life of the Elijah motifs that we encountered throughout the Second Temple period. The Elijah passages in the New Testament are discussed in addition to a couple of other early Christian writings that deal with the figure of the eschatological Elijah. My treatment of the Elijah tradition in the rabbinic corpus of writings is not intended to be a full and comprehensive one in this epilogue. I have chosen to survey three themes in relation to Elijah in the rabbinic sources: eschatological reconciliation; resurrection of the dead/healing; zeal and the identification with Phinehas.

CHAPTER 1

Elijah in the Book of Kings

Elijah is typically referred to in biblical scholarship as a "former" or "pre-classical" prophet because he was active in the time period prior to that of an Amos or Hosea and because what has survived are mainly stories about the prophet rather than written collections of words that were once spoken by him. What serves to set Elijah apart from all other prophets in the Hebrew scriptures (except from his successor Elisha) is his performance of or association with countless miracles – everything from raising the dead to life and multiplying food to calling down fire from heaven, parting the waters of the Jordan, and escaping death through heavenly ascension. Yet the figure of Elijah is not simply that of a miracle worker. The narratives about the prophet depict him in other roles as well, such as an intercessor, a social reformer, a covenant mediator, a cultic functionary, a staunch defender of Yahwism, a deliverer of oracles and a maker and breaker of royal dynasties. The multifaceted character of Elijah in these stories attests to the complex origins and development of the traditions that gave rise to such a figure.

The stories about Elijah can be found in 1 Kings 17-19, 21 and 2 Kings 1-2. Thus, they are a part of that section of the Bible commonly referred to by scholars as the "Historical Books" or the "Deuteronomistic History." These classifications

raise two critical points with respect to the Elijah stories – their genre and the extent to which they were shaped by later redactors. A discussion of both of these issues will be undertaken in this chapter, because it will help articulate the major themes present in these narratives and also give us a better sense of what kind of figure Elijah was thought to be. Various leading theories about the genre and redaction of the Elijah narratives will be examined in some detail in the ensuing pages, but the entire history of scholarship on these stories will not be covered. A great deal of scholarly attention throughout the course of the 20th century has centered on the issue of the relative dating of each of the Elijah episodes or pericopes, but this is a rather futile endeavor since there is insufficient evidence to precisely locate the stories in history. Dating issues are invariably enmeshed in theories about genre and redaction, so some talk about date will be unavoidable, but only very general remarks can be made about the context in which these stories originated. What is most important is the picture that emerges of Elijah as a holy man, that is, as a miracle worker, and as a Moses-like prophet.

The Question of Genre

One of the first things that strikes the modern reader of the Elijah stories is that they do not sound very "historical," at least not in our modern sense of the word. The first scholar to critically examine the genre of the stories involving Elijah was Hermann Gunkel, who published a short monograph on the subject in 1906.[1] As

[1] H. Gunkel, *Elias, Jahve und Baal* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1906).

he was largely influenced by the studies of folklore initiated by the Grimm brothers, he concluded that the Elijah narratives were composed of a number of separate, individual stories that circulated orally among the folk and which were only collected later and put into writing. Gunkel insisted that these popular oral tales be classified generically as *Sage* ("legends") and not as *Geschichte* ("history"). Gunkel understood the term *Sage* to refer to a more artistic and aesthetic kind of narrative which describes incredible events and larger-than-life heroes and whose main purpose is not to provide an accurate account of historical events, but to entertain and to inspire.[2]

Gunkel focused his attention on the various folk motifs or themes found in the Elijah narratives that have parallels both within and without biblical literature. For example, there are two stories about Elijah being sustained in the wilderness (1 Kgs 17:2-6; 19:5-7). This motif can also be found in the story of the manna and quail from heaven in Exodus 16 and in the narrative about Hagar and her son in Genesis 21. Animals coming to the aid of humans (1 Kgs 17:2-6) is another popular motif which is also present in the biblical Flood story and in other ancient tales, like the one about a she-wolf nursing the infant twins Romulus and Remus. The miracle of the unending supply in 1 Kings 17:7-16 and the resurrection of the widow's son in 17:17-24 parallel the ones involving the prophet Elisha in 2 Kings 4:1-37.[3] Elijah's encounters with Obadiah and Ahab in

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[2] Gunkel, *Elias, Jahve und Baal*, 5-6.

[3] The motifs of the "unfailing supply" and "resurrection of the dead" can be found in extra-biblical sources as well. One example given by Gunkel is the story of Philemon and Baucis in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (VIII, 679) where the supply of wine in the mixing-barrel never fails even though it is continually being ladled out. The miracle of resurrection is performed by Jesus with the youth of Nain in Luke 7:11-17 and by Apollonius of Tyana in his biography by Philostratus (IV, 45). For other parallels see Gunkel, *Elias, Jahve und Baal*, 69.

18:7-20 (cf. also 1 Kgs 21) relate to the motif of a hero or prophet confronting a representative of the state, just as Samuel did with Saul, Nathan with David, Isaiah with Ahaz, John the Baptist with Herod, and Jesus with Pilate and Caiaphas. Gunkel also stresses the countless allusions to the Mosaic tradition in the Elijah narratives, especially in 1 Kings 19, which he refers to as "eine wundervolle Symphonie verschiedener Motive."[4] The despair of the hero (19:4; cf. Exod 5:22), the journey of 40 days and nights (19:8; cf. Exod 24:18, 34:28) and the manifestation of the divine (19:11-14; cf. Exod 19:9, 18; 33:20-23), all have their parallels in the stories about Moses.

As a result of this discovery of various folk motifs, Gunkel felt that it was necessary to question the unity of the Elijah narratives. While historical narratives are unified compositions at the outset, relating events over a longer period of time, legends exist originally in the form of short, individual stories that describe a single scene. When these brief legends are eventually written down, they naturally become more discursive and develop into longer and greater compositions. Thus, Gunkel explains that 1 Kgs 17 is composed of three separate legends that were not originally connected with one another until a narrative writer organized them into a single entity (17:2-6, 7-16, 17-24). The story of the contest on Mt. Carmel in 1 Kgs 18 forms the main part of this chapter (18:21-40). It is preceded by two introductions which were later added, Elijah's encounters with Obadiah and with Ahab (18:7-15, 16-20). Gunkel surmises that the meeting between Elijah and Ahab was necessary to the story-line, but that the Obadiah scene represented a late doubling of this motif. Finally, the material in 1

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[4] Gunkel, *Elias, Jahve und Baal*, 26.

Kgs 17-18 was shaped into a unified whole by the overarching theme of the three-year drought (17:1; 18:1-3a, 41-46). The rest of the Elijah narratives were formed in a similar manner. The main part of chapter 19 is the theophany at Horeb (19:11-18) to which the legend of Elijah under the broom-tree was added. Gunkel also recognized the oracle against the house of Ahab in 1 Kgs 21:20b-29 as a later insertion, as well as the motif of Elijah's calling down fire from heaven in 2 Kgs 1:9-16.

In light of the legendary and secondary nature of much of the Elijah narratives Gunkel felt that it was impossible to sketch a life of the 'historical' Elijah, although he did attempt to determine what parts of the Elijah tradition might have had some kernel of authenticity to them. As for the miracles associated with Elijah, none of these has any historical value according to Gunkel. The image of Elijah as a miracle worker may have derived from the people's exaggeration or misunderstanding of the spirit-possessed behavior of ecstatic prophets – the oldest type of prophet in ancient Israel.[5] Another type of prophet was the "political" prophet who spoke against the king and his actions. Gunkel accords greater historical value to this far less miraculous image of Elijah as the prophet who fights for justice and monotheism.[6] Moreover, the complaint of Elijah at Horeb, that he is alone and the people are against him, is also of some historical value. As a defender of monotheism, the 'historical' Elijah stood in opposition to his own people and even prophesied destruction for Israel on account of their syncretistic ways (cf. 1 Kgs 19:18). For Gunkel, this image of

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[5] Gunkel, *Elias, Jahve und Baal*, 46-47.

[6] Gunkel, *Elias, Jahve und Baal*, 48.

Elijah is much closer to that of the later writing-prophets and is what led to his eventual association with Moses.

Gunkel's classification of the Elijah narratives as legends marked a major turning point in the scholarship of the day. He was absolutely correct to raise serious questions about the unity of the Elijah stories as well as their historicity. What we learn from Gunkel is that the Elijah cycle of narratives was created from short, individual units which relate some version of a common folk motif that has little to no grounding in any real historical event. However, Gunkel never doubted the existence of an actual prophet named Elijah who existed in the 9th century BCE about whom these numerous oral tales arose among the folk during the prophet's own lifetime or shortly thereafter.[7] Herein lies the faulty assumption that all legends or all stories of a miraculous nature must have originated at the oral level and among the non-literate commoners of a society. Since Gunkel was only interested in the pre-literary stage of these stories, he spends little to no time reflecting on the redaction of the legends once they were put into writing.

Nearly seventy years later, Alexander Rofé set out to establish a more nuanced generic classification of the Elijah legends than Gunkel, as well as a more lengthy process of development and a much later date of composition for many of the narratives.[8] Rofé ascertains the presence of four different genres in

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[7] Gunkel claims that the stories were written down not long after Elijah's death; *Elias, Jahve und Baal*, 43.

[8] A. Rofé, *The Prophetical Stories* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1988). The book is an English translation of the Hebrew original, *Sippure ha Nevi'im*, published in 1982, and is largely a collection of articles written by Rofé in the early 1970's: "The Classification of the Prophetical Stories," *JBL* 89 (1970) 427-40; and "Classes in the Prophetical Stories: Didactic Legends and Parables," *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* 26 (1974) 143-64.

the Elijah cycle: the ethical *legendum*, the epigonic *legendum*, the epic and the novelette. The earliest of these is the ethical *legendum*, which is really a later and more moralistic version of the simple *legendum*, or a brief story that recounts a single miracle. Examples of simple *legenda* may be found throughout the Elisha cycle, such as the stories about the healing of the spring (2 Kgs 2:19-22), the cursing of the youths (2 Kgs 2:23-24), the unfailing supply of oil (2 Kgs 4:1-7), the curing of the stew (2 Kgs 4:38-41), the multiplication of the loaves and grain (2 Kgs 4:42-44), and the floating of the axehead (2 Kgs 6:1-7).[9] In these short stories the miracle is typically performed as a magical act for the purpose of displaying the prophet's supernatural powers. According to Rofé this "primitive" quality points to the origin of these simple *legenda* as popular tales that were transmitted orally in the northern kingdom among the prophetic disciples associated with Elisha.[10]

At a later date some of these simple *legenda* underwent a process of moral and literary development and were transformed into "ethical *legenda*" – stories in which the value of magic is downplayed and the power of prayer and the word of God are emphasized. The story about Elijah's multiplication of the Zarephathite widow's meal and oil in 1 Kgs 17:8-16 is an ethical transformation of the simple *legendum* involving Elisha in 2 Kgs 4:1-7.[11] While Elisha brings about the miracle by magical means (4:4-5), Elijah does so through the word of

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[9] Rofé, *The Prophetical Stories*, 13.

[10] Rofé, *The Prophetical Stories*, 18.

[11] However, Rofé states that it is impossible to prove that this story about Elijah is directly dependent on the parallel tale of Elisha's multiplication of the widow's oil; *The Prophetical Stories*, 132.

God communicated by his prophet (17:14). Also the wife of the prophetic disciple in the Elisha tale does nothing to warrant the performance of such a miracle, while the widow in the Elijah version proves herself to be a woman of excellent moral character (cf. 17:10b-11a, 15). Similarly, Elijah's raising of the widow's son in 1 Kgs 17:17-24 is a later moralistic version of the story involving Elisha's raising of the Shunammite's son in 2 Kgs 4:18-37. The prophet's supernatural powers take center stage in the Elisha story (vv. 34-36), whereas the Elijah account emphasizes the act of the prophet's prayer and God's acceptance of that prayer (vv. 20-22).[12] Furthermore, Rofé argues that the *legendum* in 1 Kgs 17:17-24 is not an integral part of the account of God's struggle with Baal. It plays no part in the chronology of the drought (1 Kgs 16:29-19:18) and was probably inserted into its present position by a later author. This story shows signs of a late composition, for only here (17:18, 24) and in the tale of Ahaziah's illness (2 Kgs 1:9, 10, 11, 12, 13) is Elijah called "man of God" – a title commonly used in the Elisha stories that was secondarily applied to Elijah.[13]

Along with a few "ethical *legenda*" (cf. 1 Kgs 17:2-7, 8-16, 17-24), the composition of 1 Kgs 16:29 –19:18 includes other originally independent stories, like the bringing of rain and the confrontation with the prophets of Baal in 18:1-46 and the theophany at Horeb in 19:1-18. Rofé classifies this lengthy

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[12] Rofé, *The Prophetical Stories*, 134. Rofé argues that the story of the resurrection of the Zarephathite widow's son in 1 Kgs 17:17-24 is clearly dependent upon the story of the Shunammite in 2 Kgs 4:18-37 because of two details: 1) the Shunammite's son was dead and Elisha resurrected him, but the condition of the Zarephathite boy is ambiguously described; and 2) the Shunammite was a wealthy woman who would have had the resources necessary for the addition of an upper chamber to her house in order to provide accommodation for Elisha, but the widow of Zarephath is described as completely destitute though still as having an attic in which to house Elijah.

[13] Rofé, *The Prophetical Stories*, 133.

composition as an "epic" because of the clear interrelation between its different components, its chronological framework, the richness of its literary detail, its artistic complexity and the subject of the tale itself – that is, "the Battle of the Gods."[14] Since a good deal of the Elijah material is dependent on the Elisha narratives which follow, the earliest possible date for the composition of 1 Kgs 17-19 would be the first half of the 8th century BCE after the creation of the Elisha cycle was complete. An even later date is indicated by the fact that the entire composition is framed by material taken from the Royal Chronicles of Northern Israel (cf. 16:29-33 and 19:15-18) which Rofé supposes did not become public domain until after the fall of Israel in 722 BCE. Yet the stories display no knowledge of the prohibition of altars nor of the unification of worship in Jerusalem (cf. 18:30; 19:10, 14). Thus the epic must have been composed sometime after 722 BCE but before Josiah's reform in 621 BCE. Rofé reasons that the most likely time period would be during Manasseh's reign (698-643 BCE) when "idolatry once again became a crucial issue in Judah."[15]

Rofé dates the composition of the Naboth story in 1 Kings 21:1-16 and the tale of Ahaziah's illness in 2 Kings 1:2-17a to the postexilic period and insists that both were inserted into the Dtr History at some point in the 5th or 4th centuries BCE. He classifies the Naboth story as a "novelette" and describes it as a late retelling of the more reliable 9th-century account of the Naboth incident reported in 2 Kings 9:21-26. The main difference between the two versions is that in 2 Kgs 9:25-26 the responsibility for Naboth's death is Ahab's alone (as it is, too, in 1 Kgs

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[14] Rofé, *The Prophetical Stories*, 195-96.

[15] Rofé, *The Prophetical Stories*, 188-89.

21:17-20bα), while the later retelling of the incident in 1 Kgs 21:1-16 "has transformed reality" by shifting the blame from Ahab to Jezebel.[16] Rofé also explains that 1 Kgs 21:20bβ-26 is made up of Deuteronomistic stereotypes with no reference at all to the Naboth episode. This Dtr passage was originally concerned with a different sin, that of idolatry, which was not connected to the Naboth incident until after the new version of the story in vv. 1-16 had been created. Verses 27-29 are a final appendix that was added later still.

The contents and linguistic features of 1 Kgs 21:1-16 are a clear sign of the novelette's late composition. For example, Rofé points to the use of the Hebrew word חרים, "nobles" or "freemen," in verses 8 and 11. This is a loan-word from Aramaic which only shows up in the Hebrew Bible in very late passages (cf. Jer 27:20; 39:6; Neh 2:16; 4:8, 13; 5:7; 6:17; 7:5; 13:17; Isa 34:12; Eccl 10:17; Sir 10:25).[17] The use of the verb העיד "to testify" in verses 10 and 13 is further evidence for the late date of this story because in Classical Hebrew this verb occurs only with the meaning of appointing witnesses or warning somebody. By the 5th century BCE, it came to be used to express the idea of testifying as in Mal 2:14 and Job 29:11. Furthermore, Rofé maintains that the stigmatization of Jezebel is the main purpose of this late retelling and so he locates its historical setting around the time of Ezra and Nehemiah who fought against intermarriage with foreign women.

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[16] Rofé, "The Vineyard of Naboth: The Origin and Message of the Story," *Vetus Testamentum* 38 (1988) 96-97.

[17] On the basis of the letters of Nehemiah and the Elephantine papyri, Rofé explains that the חרים were a narrow class of nobles who were free from compulsory labor to the Persian king in exchange for services rendered to the crown; "The Vineyard of Naboth," 99. For more examples of late linguistic features in this story, see "The Vineyard of Naboth," 97-101.

Rofé classifies the Ahaziah narrative in 2 Kgs 1 as an "epigonic *legendum*" because it was created in a post-classical period and is imitative of the earlier and more creative Elijah narratives. The prophet is portrayed in this story in the same manner as in all the other legends about him combined. He wears a mantle of hair cloth (2 Kgs 1:8, cf. 1 Kgs 19:19; 2 Kgs 2:13-14), makes sudden appearances (2 Kgs 1:6, cf. 1 Kgs 18:7, 12), speaks boldly and vehemently before kings (2 Kgs 1:16, cf. 1 Kgs 18:8; 21:17-24), successfully escapes capture (2 Kgs 1:9-14, cf. 1 Kgs 17:3; 18:1-16; 19:1-3), treats his opponents cruelly (2 Kgs 1:10-12, cf. 1 Kgs 18:40) and brings down fire from heaven (2 Kgs 1:10-12, cf. 1 Kgs 18:24-39). Thus the Ahaziah narrative represents "a kind of synthesis of all the Elijah narratives."[18] There is also linguistic evidence that supports a postexilic date for this legend. Most of the Yahwistic names in 2 Kgs 1 end in יה instead of יהו (2 Kgs 1:2, 3, 4, 8, 12, 18; cf. also Mal 3:23) – the shortened form being more common in the Second Temple period.[19] Another example is the expression לדרוש ב– " to inquire of" which appears four times in this chapter (2 Kgs 1:2, 3, 6, 16), twice in the Book of Chronicles (1 Chr 10:14; 2 Chr 34:26) and also in Qumran literature.[20] The preferred expression in Biblical Hebrew is either לדרוש את or לדרוש אל.

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[18] Rofé, *The Prophetical Stories*, 37-38.

[19] The form אליהו is found four times in 2 Kgs 1 (vv. 10, 13, 15, 17) but Rofé explains that these are instances of "hypercorrection," that is, that some of the later forms were changed into archaic ones because Second Temple period scribes wished to preserve the ancient Hebrew language; *The Prophetical Stories*, 35. Rofé lists other examples of late linguistic features in this story on pp. 36-37.

[20] CD 1:18; 1QS 6:6. Rofé, *The Prophetical Stories*, 36.

Rofé sides with the majority of scholars who maintain that the story of Elijah's ascension in 2 Kgs 2:1-18 actually belongs to the Elisha cycle because it is Elisha's fate which is at issue here and not Elijah's, despite the fact that the central event in the story is Elijah's heavenly ascent.[21] Plus there are certain elements in this narrative which appear elsewhere in the Elisha cycle but are wholly lacking in the other Elijah stories, such as the role played by the "sons of the prophets" and the title "O father, father, Israel's chariots and horsemen" by which Elijah is denoted (2:12; cf. 2 Kgs 13:14). For Rofé, this transference of Elisha's characteristics to Elijah points to a late date for the story. Another indication of the story's late date is its function as an account of the hero's beginnings in a *vita* or legendary biography of Elisha, which extends from 2 Kgs 2 (more precisely, 1 Kgs 19:19-21) to 2 Kgs 13:14-19. Rofé explains that over time, as the legends of a Holy Man spread, questions would arise among his audience concerning the Holy Man's origins, his early life, the means by which he received his supernatural powers, the nature of his death and so on. The response by his followers is to create accounts that would both immortalize and commemorate their great hero. According to Rofé, the miracles of the parting of the Jordan river, first by Elijah and then by Elisha, show that this story is part of a *vita* because "the miracles are not the small acts of salvation typical of the *legenda*. The purpose of the miracles is to prove by a comparison of the two prophets that Elisha is the true heir of Elijah, inheriting not only his mantle but also his spirit."[22]

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[21] Rofé, *The Prophetical Stories*, 44. Gunkel made the very same observation, see "Elisha – The Successor of Elijah (2 Kings II, 1-18)," *The Expository Times* 41 (1929-30) 186.

[22] Rofé, *The Prophetical Stories*, 46.

Rofé's detailed comparisons between the shorter and simpler legends in the Elisha cycle and the later, more theologically developed versions of those same legends in the Elijah cycle certainly contribute much to our understanding of the origins and development of the Elijah narratives. Rofé is in basic agreement with Gunkel's description of the Elijah narratives as a collection of originally independent folktales or legends that have been carefully arranged into a more unified composition. He also does well to emphasize that the overarching theme or subject around which the elements of 1 Kgs 17-19 were brought together is the battle between YHWH and Baal. Somewhat problematic is Rofé's dating of this composition to Manasseh's reign, for this is pure speculation on his part. And the use of the word 'epic' in relation to the composition's genre is a little misleading. In fact, none of the more specific terms that Rofé uses to define the genre of the Elijah narratives really gains much ground over Gunkel's basic classification of the stories as legends.[23] But the most interesting and original aspect of Rofé's work regarding the Elijah narratives is his argument for the late date of 1 Kgs 21 and 2 Kgs 1. The stylistic and linguistic evidence that he cites in defense of this position is quite compelling. Even a cursory reading through the Elijah stories reveals to the reader how distinctly different these two chapters are from the others and how different the figure of Elijah is in them as well. The image of the prophet in both of these narratives

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[23] Other scholars have also tried to be more precise about the genre of the Elijah legends but with limited gain, as Burke Long has noted [B. O. Long, *1 Kings* (FOTL 9; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984) 181-82, 186, 194]. For example, Georg Hentschel [*Die Elijaherzählungen* (Erfurter Theologische Studien 33; Leipzig: St. Benno-Verlag, 1977)] classifies the stories in 1 Kgs 17-18 as "prophetic miracle stories," 1 Kgs 21 as a "prophetic political-criticism narrative" and 1 Kgs 19 as a "prophetic lament narrative," while Simon DeVries [*Prophet Against Prophet* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978)] labels 17:2-16 a "supplicatory power story," 17:17-24 a "prophet-legitimation story" and 19:1-18 a "theophanous commission story."

will be discussed in greater detail below, but first we shall consider to what extent the Elijah narratives have been shaped by the Deuteronomistic writers.

The Issue of Redactional Development

Ever since the work of Julius Wellhausen in the late 19th century, biblical scholars have commonly recognized that the older material contained in the so-called 'historical books' was "overgrown with later accretions," which meant that it had undergone a uniform Deuteronomistic (Dtr) redaction.[24] It may be rather surprising to find, then, that some scholars believe the Elijah (and Elisha) narratives represent an exception to that theory. In a 1923 *Festschrift* for Hermann Gunkel, Gustav Hölscher claimed that all of the independent legends about Elijah (and Elisha) received their present shape by a single hand; however, that hand did not belong to the Dtr author or editor ("Rd" in Hölscher's terminology), but rather to the Elohist.[25] Like many of the scholars of his day, Hölscher followed the written sources of the Pentateuch into the historical books.[26] He traced the J source to the division of the kingdom (1 Kgs 12) and the E source to the end of 2 Kings. Hölscher argued that the Elijah cycle of narratives

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[24] J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (Reprint of the 1885 edition; Atlanta: Scholars, 1994) 228.

[25] G. Hölscher, "Das Buch der Könige, seine Quellen und seine Redaktion," in H. Schmidt, ed., *Eucharisterion* (Fs. Gunkel; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1923) 158-213.

[26] Other scholars who claimed that J and E continued far into the book of 2 Kings include: I. Benzinger, *Jahvist und Elohist in den Königsbüchern* (BZAW II.2; Berlin-Stuttgart-Leipzig: Töpelmann, 1921); and O. Eissfeldt, *Einleitung in das Alten Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1934).

is part of the E document because they are northern tales that share the same language, style and outlook as the E material in the Pentateuch. Moreover, Hölscher maintained that the Elohist brought together the diverse northern traditions that he had collected and wrote them down sometime after 586 BCE. This unusual late dating of the E source is necessitated by the view that it extends to the end of 2 Kings, which deals with the events of the Babylonian invasion and the exile.[27]

Thus, Hölscher was the first to argue that there was no trace of Dtr editing in the Elijah narratives and that they were added to the Historian's work by a later hand. This does not mean that Hölscher thought the composition of the Elijah narratives postdated the Dtr History. On the contrary, he believed that the Dtr author created his History by making use of the various written sources at his disposal (namely J and E = the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah and Israel, respectively), but that the Deuteronomist purposefully excluded or suppressed certain parts of the tradition because he did not agree with their contents. Obviously, the Dtr author would not have agreed with Elijah's rebuilding of a YHWH altar outside of Jerusalem (1 Kgs 18:30), with the manifestation of the deity at Horeb rather than at the Temple (19:11ff.), or with the prophet's not-quite-monotheistic-enough questions in 2 Kgs 1:3, 6.[28] Hölscher further suggested that the Elijah material was inserted into the Dtr History in two main blocks, 1 Kgs 17:1-22:38 and 2 Kgs 1:2-2:25, which break through the framework created by the Deuteronomist. The first block abruptly interrupts the Dtr

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[27] Hölscher, "Das Buch der Könige," 205.

[28] Hölscher, "Das Buch der Könige," 185.

author's data on the reign of Ahab in 1 Kgs 16:29-34 and 22:39-40. Half of the second block (2 Kgs 1:2ff.) was added to the material on Ahaziah's reign given in 1 Kgs 22:52-54 and 2 Kgs 1:1, 17-18, while the other half (2 Kgs 2:1-25) stands wholly outside of the Dtr author's framework and functions as a kind of introduction to the Elisha stories.[29] According to Hölscher, it was the Elohist who created the redactional joints needed to tie together the originally disparate elements of the Elijah tradition. The Elohist is also responsible for composing 1 Kgs 19:1-3a in order to connect the legends in 1 Kgs 17-18 to the ones in chapter 19 and adding 19:19-21 as a way to combine the stories about Elijah and Elisha and to portray the latter as Elijah's successor. And finally, 1 Kgs 21:27-29 were inserted by E in order to balance the Naboth legend in 1 Kgs 21:1-20a with the following stories about the Omrides.[30]

Hölscher's thesis regarding the shaping of the Elijah narratives by the Elohist would probably find few adherents today since the very existence of the E document has been so thoroughly undermined in recent scholarship. Even if one wishes to acknowledge the existence of an E source, its extension well into the historical books must be seen as an indefensible exaggeration of the documentary hypothesis. But all improbabilities with the Elohist aside, Hölscher does draw our attention to a number of significant issues relating to the Elijah

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[29] Hölscher, "Das Buch der Könige," 184-85.

[30] Hölscher argues that 1 Kgs 21:20b-26, a passage that the majority of scholars regard as Deuteronomistic, is also a post-redactional addition. He claims that the verses were added at different stages. The first insertion was 21:20b-22, 24 which was created to imitate or copy the oracles against Ahijah and Baasha in 1 Kgs 14:10-11, 15:30b, and 16:2-4. The threat against Jezebel in v. 23 was added next in order to foreshadow the account of her demise in 2 Kgs 9:36b-37. Verses 25-26 were inserted even later. According to Hölscher, other post-redactional insertions include: 1 Kgs 18:19b, 31-32a; 19:9b-11a; 2 Kgs 1:9-16; "Das Buch der Könige," 192, 196.

narratives. He was correct to underscore the linguistic and stylistic harmony of the Elijah stories (especially where 1 Kgs 17-19 is concerned), the abrupt way in which the Elijah cycle breaks into the king-list framework that surrounds it, and the uniqueness of the Elijah narratives in comparison with the rest of the material contained in the Dtr History. Hölscher is also correct to argue that some author or editor had to have linked the variant Elijah traditions together at some point and provide the necessary redactional joints, but that editor cannot be identified as the Elohist. It is interesting to note that this creativity which Hölscher allotted to the Elohist very closely resembles Martin Noth's understanding of the work of the Deuteronomist.

When Martin Noth's book, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, appeared in 1943, his theory that the corpus Deuteronomy – 2 Kings was the unified work of a single author who wrote during the exilic period (ca. 550 BCE) brought scholarship to a new level.[31] According to Noth, this Deuteronomistic author composed his history-book from the numerous independent literary sources at his disposal. He was very selective about the material he used, he wove together highly varied traditions with his own insertions and comments and he arranged them according to a carefully conceived plan. The Dtr historian approached his work with definite theological convictions. His whole attitude had been shaped by the fall of Jerusalem and the subsequent exile, which he understood as the divine retribution for the people's continual disregard of the covenant relationship between them and their God ever since the time of Moses. The

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[31] M. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1943). All citations will be based on the English translation of Noth's study, *The Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 15; Sheffield: JSOT, 1981).

themes of the Sinai tradition, the giving of the law on Horeb and the exclusive bond between YHWH and Israel, are the hallmarks of Deuteronomic language and style which is ubiquitous throughout the books of Deuteronomy through Kings. In accordance with the Deuteronomic law, the Dtr historian also placed special emphasis on the Jerusalem temple as the one and only legitimate site of worship.

With regard to the Elijah narratives in particular, Noth considered the sequence of texts in 1 Kgs 16:29 – 2 Kgs 1:18 as a conscious arrangement by the Dtr author. Noth maintained that the Elijah cycle was made up of originally independent episodes welded together into a more of less unified, continuous narrative before the Dtr author's time. The Dtr author incorporated this continuous narrative into his history by splitting it up into parts. The introductory section on Ahab (16:29-33) is appropriately followed by the first of the Elijah stories "in their traditional wording" (1 Kgs 17-19).[32] According to Noth, the only Dtr insertion in the great complex of 1 Kgs 17-19 is the word "Horeb" in 19:8. The Dtr author is also responsible for placing the story of Naboth's vineyard, which contains the prophecy of Ahab's death in 21:19, immediately before chapter 22. The Dtr author added to the prophecy of Ahab's death in 21:19 a passage of his own (vv. 21-22, 24-26) which looks beyond Ahab's personal fate to the fate of his dynasty (vv. 20, 23 are later still). Noth further claims that 2Kgs 1:2-17a was originally handed down without the name of a king, but that the Dtr author applied it to Ahaziah, since, coming as it did after 1Kgs 22, it could not refer to Ahab.[33]

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[32] Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, 71.

[33] Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, 71.

Noth's thesis concerning the unity, nature, and purpose of the Dtr History has generally been accepted by scholars, even though many since then have attempted to adapt or modify certain elements of his argument.[34] In relation to the Elijah legends in particular, Noth's assumption that they formed a pre-Dtr unity simply because they deal with events that are said to have taken place during the time of Ahab should be strongly questioned, especially in light of Rofé's more recent contributions to the subject. Noth's argument that the Dtr historian, then, broke apart this unity, spliced it into large pieces, interwove the pieces with other historical material at his disposal and added the word "Horeb" in 1 Kgs 19:18 as well as the prophecies in 21:21-26 is wholly unconvincing. Why is it that the Dtr author would have gone through all these complicated steps to integrate the Elijah material into his History but fail to make minor editorial changes to those passages which directly contradict his own theological premises (cf. 18:30; 19:10, 14)? One would have to view the Dtr historian as either a very sloppy editor or as someone who made "extraordinarily large concessions to the tradition," which is, in fact, what Noth claims.[35] Perhaps the Dtr historian did go out of his way to honor tradition, but that still does not account for the abrupt and rather disjointed way in which the Elijah cycle begins.

In his 1957 monograph, *Elia*, Georg Fohrer argued for more Dtr redaction in the Elijah narratives than any scholar had previously. He put forth a rather complicated, three-stage schema for the development of these stories. The original narratives about Elijah included: the drought story (1 Kgs 17:1; 18:1-2a,

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[34] For a brief overview of Noth's theory and subsequent scholarly reactions to it, see S. L. McKenzie, "Deuteronomistic History," *ABD* 2.160-68.

[35] Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, 95.

16-17, 41-46); the episode on Mt. Carmel (1 Kgs 18:19-40); the theophany at Horeb (1 Kgs 19:3b, 8b, 9-13); the call of Elisha (1 Kgs 19:19-21); the murder of Naboth (1 Kgs 21:1-9, 11-20); and the story of Ahaziah's oracle (2 Kgs 1:2-8, 17a). All of these independent narratives (except for the call of Elisha and the theophany on Horeb) contained "a historical nucleus" and, according to Fohrer, originated in prophetic circles during the prophet's own lifetime. During the oral transmission of these stories six "anecdotes" were added on and they include the following: Elijah fed at the brook Cherith (1 Kgs 17:2-6); Elijah fed at Zarephath (17:7-16); the restoration of the widow's son (17:17-24); the encounter with Obadiah (18:2b-15); sustenance provided by an angel (1 Kgs 19:4a, 5-8); and the attempted arrest of Elijah (2 Kgs 1:9-16).[36] In contrast to the original narratives, none of these anecdotes is related to actual historical events since they recount miracles, employ common fairy-tale motifs and represent the doubling of stories from the Elisha tradition. Fohrer claimed that it was at this point – after the addition of these anecdotes – when the Elijah narratives were written down sometime prior to the end of the 9th century BCE.[37]

Although Fohrer assigned an early date to the Elijah stories, he did not take this to mean that the form in which we now have them was early. The third stage of development involved the addition of numerous Deuteronomistic words and phrases, such as the expression "before whom I stand" (17:1; 18:15), the formulas "the word of YHWH came" (17:2, 8; 18:1; 21:17) and "the hand of YHWH came upon" (18:46), the phrase "to bring to remembrance" (17:18), the

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[36] G. Fohrer, *Elia* (2d ed.; Zurich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1968) 43-44; idem, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968) 232-33.

[37] Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 233.

confessional formula "to know that you are God" (17:24, 18:36-37) and the representation of the prophet as "the servant of YHWH" (18:36).[38] Fohrer attributed these phrases and expressions to the Dtr author because they happened to occur almost exclusively in late texts, especially in the books of Deuteronomy, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.[39] The Dtr editor is also responsible for omitting the reason for the threat of drought in 17:1 due to the introduction he provided in 16:29-33, for inserting the formula "it was after these things" at the beginning of the Naboth story (21:1) because it presupposed the stories in chapters 17-19, and for providing a framework for the final Elijah story through the addition of 2 Kgs 1:1 and 17aβb. Moreover, Fohrer recognized successive stages of redaction in the predictions concerning the destruction of the royal dynasty and Jezebel in 21:19-29. Belonging to the pre-Dtr tradition are verses 19-20abα, 23, 27-29. The Dtr author of the book of Kings added 21:20bβ-22, 24, while a later Dtr redactor supplemented it with 21:25-26.

A definite problem with Fohrer's argument is his view of the Dtr historian as one who simply added pious or didactic phrases to an existing text in a random fashion, and this the redactor apparently did only in chapters 17 and 18 (and also 21:17). Winfried Thiel has criticized Fohrer's method by remarking that, "Man bekommt den Eindruck, als habe die Redaktion an allen möglichen Textstellen unplanmäβig eingegriffen, um ihre Formulierungen dort einzutragen."[40] Another significant weakness of Fohrer's thesis is his

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[38] Fohrer, *Elia*, 53-55.

[39] See, for example, Deut 4:10, 10:8; Jer 7:10, 15:19, 35:19, 46:1, 47:1, 49:34; Ezek 1:3, 3:22, 33:22, 37:1, 40:1; Fohrer, *Elia*, 53-55.

[40] W. Thiel, "Deuteronomistische Redaktionsarbeit in den Elia-Erzählungen," in J. A. Emerton, ed., *Congress Volume: Leuven, 1989* (Leiden: Brill, 1991) 151.

assumption that the "original" Elijah narratives arose in prophetic circles during the prophet's lifetime and are based on actual historical events. Furthermore, the method by which Fohrer determined the 'historical' or 'original' elements of the tradition involved the stripping away of anything that contained fairy-tale motifs or what he regarded as pious Dtr insertions. As for the various expressions in the Elijah stories that have parallels in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, this only indicates that 1 Kgs 17-19 underwent a late editing by someone who knew and perhaps helped to shape the prophetic books. But it does not point decisively to Dtr editing.[41]

Since the work of Hölscher, Noth and Fohrer, no consensus has yet been reached concerning the level of influence that the Deuteronomists had on the present shape of the Elijah narratives. It seems that the majority of scholars, however, have followed Noth in presuming a pre-Dtr unity for the Elijah stories and in accepting the notion that the Dtr redactor was the one responsible for situating these stories into his History. But just how heavy the hand of the Deuteronomist(s) was beyond the basic task of arrangement has been a major bone of contention.

On one end of the spectrum are those scholars who contend that the entire Elijah cycle of narratives took its present shape in the 9th century BCE. In other words, the only thing the Dtr historian did with the Elijah legends was to incorporate the whole block of material as it was into his work, adding to it a prophecy of his own in 1 Kgs 21:20b-26 (give or take a verse or half-verse). Of course, most of the scholars who find themselves on this end of the spectrum are

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[41] S. L. McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings. The Composition of the Book of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History* (VTSup 42; Leiden: Brill, 1991) 86.

usually not interested at all in the issue of the Dtr redaction of the Elijah narratives anyway, but in their origins and possible relation to historical events, particularly those connected with Jehu's coup. In his 1968 *Habilitationsschrift*, Odil Hannes Steck argued for seeing a small base tradition about Elijah that originated in 9th-century prophetic circles which was reworked by a redactor at the beginning of Jehu's reign in order to justify the revolt against the Omride dynasty.[42] Consequently, these additions and reworkings included various polemics against Jezebel and the prophets of Baal (e.g., 1 Kgs 18:3b-4, 13, 19-20, 40; 19:1-3a; 21:1-16, 23, 27-29). More recently, Marsha C. White has professed that *all* of the Elijah legends are the literary creations of royal Jehuite scribes written for the sole purpose of legitimating Jehu's coup.[43] Elijah is largely a fictional character in her view, modeled by the scribes after other figures, namely Moses, Elisha, Nathan and Jehu. This conscious patterning of the Elijah legends after those involving other important figures from Israel's past is thought to lend credibility and authority to Elijah and, thereby, to justify Jehu's bloody actions. Yet, there really is no evidence at all to support the claim that the Elijah legends were composed during the time of either the Omrides or the Jehuites. The

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[42] O. H. Steck, *Überlieferung und Zeitgeschichte in den Elia-Erzählungen* (WMANT 26; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1968) 32-77. Many others have followed Steck in connecting the Elijah legends to the Jehuite dynasty or seeing them as Jehuite propaganda. See, for example, S. De Vries, *Prophet Against Prophet*, 112-16; A. F. Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings: A Ninth-Century Document (1 Samuel 1 – 2 Kings 10)* (CBQMS 17: Washington: Catholic Biblical Association, 1986); and J. A. Todd, "The Pre-Deuteronomistic Elijah Cycle," in R. B. Coote, ed., *Elijah and Elisha in Socioliterary Perspective* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992) 1-35.

[43] According to White, the only aspect of the Elijah cycle that may have had its origin in earlier (pre-Jehuite), oral tradition is the drought legend of 1 Kgs 17:1, 7 and 18:1, 41-46. She argues for the priority of the drought material because it is "the only instance in which Elijah is not a derived character;" M. C. White, *The Elijah Legends and Jehu's Coup* (Brown Judaic Studies 311; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997) 31-32.

intense polemic against Baal in the stories contained in 1 Kgs 17-19 and 2 Kgs 2 surely makes the most sense in a preexilic (and probably pre-721 BCE) context, but it is impossible to be any more precise about it than that.

On the other end of the spectrum are those scholars who have argued that the Elijah narratives have undergone such extensive Dtr revision and redaction that the original stories cannot be seen anymore or that they can no longer be properly understood apart from a 6th-century context.[44] Terence Collins, for example, explains that Elijah and Elisha serve as literary figures in a story-scheme that is a vehicle for the Deuteronomist views on the cause and meaning of the exile. Whatever the prehistory of these narratives, they must now be viewed primarily for what they have become – "an integral part of the Deuteronomist story of Israel."[45] Collins focuses specifically on the connection between Moses and Elijah. Because the connection between these two figures is set out most clearly in 1 Kgs 19, Collins surmises that this chapter may have been especially composed for the occasion in order to bring out the significance of Elijah as the Deuteronomists saw him. He also notes that the connection between 1 Kgs 18 and 19 is "an artificial one," being established rather weakly by 19:1-3a.[46] In addition, Collins points to the continuity between Elijah and Elisha as "an important feature in the Deuteronomist scheme of things" because it serves as a model for the idea of prophetic succession. Thus, the story of the

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[44] See E. Nielsen, *Oral Tradition. A Modern Problem in Old Testament Introduction* (Studies in Biblical Theology 11; Chicago: A. R. Allenson, 1954) 77; and T. Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah. The Redaction Criticism of the Prophetical Books* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993) 130-39.

[45] T. Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah*, 132.

[46] T. Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah*, 133.

transference of power from Elijah to Elisha in 2 Kgs 2:1-18 is another instance where the Deuteronomist writer produced a tale to fit his own ideological agenda. The literary approach that Collins uses to analyze the redactional view of these prophetic narratives can and does yield profitable insights into these stories. However, one must be careful not to view every motif or theme that is in keeping with the general tenor of the book of Deuteronomy as the product of Dtr redactor(s). Surely some of the Elijah narratives and the ideas expressed in them came from an earlier time period, were found agreeable to the so-called Deuteronomists and were left unchanged by them.[47]

Somewhere in the middle of the two extremes stands a number of scholars who find more Dtr influence in the Elijah narratives than someone like White does, but far less than someone like Collins. This group tends to include those members of the "Göttingen school" who advocate that the Dtr History was the product of multiple editors. Rudolf Smend initiated this approach in 1971 when he argued that the original version of the Dtr History (DtrG) was later supplemented with additions made by a nomistic Deuteronomist (DtrN).[48] His observations were quickly followed up by Wilhelm Dietrich, who sought to distinguish a prophetically oriented redactor (DtrP) from the other two.[49] And

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[47] On the problem of "pan-Deuteronomism," see the recent collection of essays in L. S. Schearing and S. L. McKenzie, eds., *Those Elusive Deuteronomists. The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism* (JSOTSup 268; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999) and especially the one by Robert R. Wilson, pp. 67-82.

[48] R. Smend, "Das Gesetz und die Völker. Ein Beitrag zur deuteronomischen Redaktionsgeschichte," in H. W. Wolff, ed., *Probleme biblischer Theologie* (Fs. G. von Rad; Munich: Kaiser, 1971) 494-509. See also Smend, "Das Wort Jahwes an Elia. Erwägungen zur Komposition von 1 Reg. xvii-xix," *VT* 25 (1975) 525-43.

[49] W. Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972).

finally, Ernst Würthwein developed an even more elaborate model of creation for the Deuteronomistic book of Kings by designating the existence of several different prophetic and nomistic Dtr redactors.[50] Besides being the ones responsible for adding many of the Elijah legends in their traditional wording to the basic text (DtrG), DtrP and DtrN are also attributed with making a number of minor editorial changes to the texts as they went along. The verses which have been assigned to one or another of these Dtr redactors by Smend, Dietrich and/or Würthwein include the following: 17:16b; 18:3b-4, 18b, 31-32a, 36; 19:4b, 9b-10, 13b-14. Naturally, all three scholars consider the oracles against Ahab and his dynasty in 1 Kgs 21:17-29 (or at least vv. 19b-26) to be the work of the Dtr redactors and to have developed in multiple stages.[51] The multiple redaction theory propounded by the members of the Göttingen school has been rather severely criticized over the years for assuming Noth's conclusions about the Dtr History and for not being able to produce an entirely clear picture of the three redactors.[52] One can evidence in this approach the kind of influence that Fohrer's work had on subsequent analyses of the Dtr redaction of the Elijah narratives.

While nearly every scholar since Noth has followed his lead in accepting the notion that the Dtr redactor(s) was responsible for including the Elijah narratives in his History, there have been a few dissenters to argue otherwise.

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[50] E. Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige. 1. Kön. 17 – 2. Kön. 25* (ATD 11/2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984).

[51] For a brief overview of the theories of Smend, Dietrich and Würthwein in specific relation to the Elijah narratives, see Thiel, "Deuteronomistische Redaktionsarbeit in den Elia-Erzählungen," 151-55.

[52] See McKenzie, "Deuteronomistic History," 163.

Positioned nowhere along the spectrum of possibilities outlined above is Steven L. McKenzie, whose theory about the Elijah narratives is similar in many respects to that of Hölscher's some seventy years previous. McKenzie maintains that all of 1 Kgs 17-19, 2 Kgs 1:2-17aα and 2 Kgs 2 (including the Elisha stories) were intrusively inserted into the Dtr History by a later editor because they break unexpectedly into the Dtr author's framework (i.e., 1 Kgs 16:29-33; 22:39-40; 2 Kgs 1:1, 17aβ-18; 3:1-3), lack typical Dtr language and contain numerous references to legitimate YHWH altars outside of Jerusalem (cf. 18:30; 19:10, 14).[53] It should also be mentioned that, while McKenzie regards the Dtr History as the work of a single author, he differs from Noth by dating the original composition to Josiah's reign rather than to the exilic period.[54] McKenzie goes on to emphasize that the contents of the Elijah narratives bear no relation to the Dtr schema of describing the fall of the Israelite dynasties on account of their continuation in the "sins of Jeroboam" – that is, worshipping at the idolatrous shrines he erected at Dan and Bethel. On this last point, McKenzie demonstrates how the stories about the houses of Jeroboam and Baasha in 1 Kgs 11-16 were composed by the Dtr author (except for 1 Kgs 13, which is a post-Dtr addition). The Dtr author forecast the fall of these successive dynasties with oracles put into

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[53] McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings*, 86-87. McKenzie notes that J. M. Miller ["The Elisha Cycle and the Accounts of the Omride Wars," *JBL* 85 (1966) 450] contended that the Elijah legends in 1 Kgs 17-19 seemed to be post-Dtr additions to the book of Kings, and that C. Alcaina Canosa ["Panorama crítico del ciclo de Eliseo," *Estudios bíblico* 23 (1964) 217-34] argued that the first redaction of Kings did not include either the Elijah or the Elisha materials.

[54] On dating the composition of the Dtr History to the reign of Josiah, see also Chapter 10, "The Themes of the Book of Kings and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History" in Frank M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 274-89. Both McKenzie (*The Trouble with Kings*, 149) and Cross favor a preexilic date because of the promise of an unending dynasty of David (cf. 1 Kgs 11:36) and because the theme of Manasseh's sinfulness seems to be "tacked on" (cf. 2 Kgs 21:8-15).

the mouths of prophets (1 Kgs 14:7-16; 16:1-4), which were subsequently fulfilled (1 Kgs 15:27-30; 16:11-13). The prophecies and their fulfillment notices are virtually identical in proclaiming that YHWH will sweep away the king and his household and that their bodies will not be buried, but rather eaten by dogs and birds. Next, the Dtr author linked these notices to a prophetic legend describing the downfall (1 Kgs 14:1-18; 16:1-4).[55] However, the concerns of the Elijah narratives in 1 Kgs 17-19 and 2 Kgs 1 are different. There the concern is over the incursion of Canaanite cults during the reign of Ahab and his son. There is no mention of the sins of Jeroboam, and what's more, Elijah is portrayed as a miracle worker in these narratives rather than as a messenger like the prophets Ahijah and Jehu ben Hanani in 1 Kgs 14 and 16.

Yet, the depiction of Elijah in 1 Kgs 21 is not that of a miracle worker. The Naboth story never mentions Baal and shows no connection with Canaanite religion. Rather, it deals with Israelite law and social justice. McKenzie notes also how Elijah's prophetic role in the Naboth story is more like that of a traditional prophet, like Samuel, Nathan or Ahijah, and greatly resembles the Dtr author's notion of a prophet as one who delivers oracles of judgment against the king. According to McKenzie, this indicates that the Elijah cycle in 1 Kgs 17-19 and 2 Kgs 1 had a different tradition history from the Naboth tale in 1 Kgs 21.[56]

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[55] McKenzie surmises that the Dtr author may have used an older prophetic legend as the basis for his story in 14:1-18. The lack of an accompanying narrative in 16:1-4 suggests that the Dtr author had no *Vorlage* for Jehu ben Hanani's oracle, but that he still composed 16:1-4 regardless of this fact; *The Trouble with Kings*, 62-65.

[56] McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings*, 84. Another indication that 1 Kgs 17-19 is a post-Dtr insertion is that Elijah is called "the Tishbite" in 1 Kgs 21:17, as though he had not been previously introduced. "In other words, the Naboth story seems not to presuppose the earlier Elijah stories;" 86-87.

It is clear to McKenzie that the Naboth narrative proper in vv. 1-16 is markedly different from the report of Elijah's oracle in vv. 17-29, but he focuses his attention entirely on the oracle portion of the chapter. The oldest (pre-Dtr) element of the oracle unit includes verses 17-18a, 19a, and perhaps 20abα because they introduce an individual condemnation of Ahab. This original condemnation has been supplanted by insertions in v. 19b and vv. 20bβ-29. The portion that was composed by the Dtr author is vv. 20bβ-22 and 24 (since these verses are nearly identical in form to the Dtr oracles against the houses of Jeroboam and Baasha in 1 Kgs 14 and 16), while the rest of it (vv. 19b, 23, 25-29) is a post-Dtr insertion.[57] As for the narrative in 21:1-16, McKenzie believes that there was an older Naboth tradition that the Dtr author used in order to have something to which he could append his judgment oracle against Ahab. However, the form in which the story has come down to us has been significantly "retouched" by a late (i.e., postexilic), anti-Jezebel redactor.[58]

McKenzie is quick to stress that the post-Dtr insertion of the Elijah narratives has nothing to do with the date of their composition: "The stories themselves may be much earlier, but they were edited and added to the DH in the exile or afterwards."[59] There is no further discussion of the origins of these narratives since that is not the purpose of his study. McKenzie has certainly improved upon the work done by Hölscher some time ago and his proposal is a compelling one because it does account for the differences between Dtr concerns and the concerns of these legends.

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[57] McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings*, 67-69.

[58] McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings*, 76.

[59] McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings*, 87.

In summary, what we can say about the Elijah cycle of narratives is that it is a composite made up of a number of shorter, individual legends that were added to the Dtr History either by the Dtr author-redactor himself or by a later redactor. The legends contain countless folk motifs or themes that play up the miraculous or sacred powers of the prophet and his heroic qualities. While the Elijah stories are set within the reign of Ahab and his son, their actual origin or date of composition is from a later time. Some of the Elijah legends were secondarily developed from earlier tales involving Elisha, while others bear the linguistic and stylistic hallmarks of an exilic or postexilic creation. Contrary to those scholars who have argued that all of the Elijah legends arose during the prophet's lifetime or shortly thereafter, the literary evidence seems to suggest that these stories developed over a very long period of time.

The Elijah narratives most certainly underwent some process of late editing. The issue of how much Dtr redaction the Elijah stories have experienced is a complicated one and the theories on this topic have run the gamut of possibilities. The one part of the Elijah cycle that appears to command a consensus as being Deuteronomistic is the oracle against Ahab and his dynasty in 1 Kgs 21:20bβ-24 (minus v. 23?). Allocating other passages or phrases to the Dtr author on the basis of linguistic criteria or characteristic concepts, themes or motifs (e.g., Mosaic typology or prophetic succession) lacks substantial scholarly support. There is still a great deal of debate over what properly constitutes Deuteronomistic influence. A post-Dtr redactor(s) also may have had a heavy hand in shaping the Elijah narratives, inserting additional oracles at the end of 1 Kgs 21 (vv. 23, 25-29) and either composing or significantly reworking the Naboth tale in 21:1-16. It is possible that other insertions and glosses were made

as well by a post-exilic editor, with the references in 1 Kgs 18:29, 36 to the מנחה or evening meal-offering being one such example.[60] Regardless of these detailed editorial issues, it is important to emphasize that none of the words, phrases, expressions, redactional joints or rearrangements that scholars have attributed to the Dtr author-editor or to some post-Dtr redactor has been of the type to alter significantly the character of Elijah which emerges from these legends. What is important to note for the purpose of this study is that the individual legends highlight a number of distinct themes that come up repeatedly in the Elijah tradition.

The bulk of the legends (all except for 1 Kgs 21) contains overt, and occasionally more subtle, polemics against the Canaanite god Baal. It is in these legends that Elijah is portrayed as a wonder worker possessing supernatural powers and as a staunch defender of Yahwism. Some of these miracle stories are among the earliest in the Elijah cycle, such as those in 1 Kgs 17-18. A strong Mosaic typology is also in evidence in the Elijah legends, particularly in 1 Kgs 19 and 2 Kgs 2. It is in these narratives, too, that the transition from Elijah to Elisha is most acute. Although Elijah is still depicted as a miracle worker or holy man in 1 Kgs 19 and 2 Kgs 2 and the polemic against Baal is still present in these narratives, they represent a slightly later development in the Elijah tradition. The Dtr author's portrait of Elijah as a deliverer of oracles against the king, just like Ahijah or Jehu ben Hanani, was the latest element of the prophet's evolving character to be added to the biblical tradition. Not too surprisingly, it is also the one that is absent from all the subsequent traditions about the future Elijah.

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[60] McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings*, 87.

Since the focus of this study is on the developing figure of Elijah in Second Temple Judaism, it is best at this point to take a closer look at the images of him as a miracle-worker, zealot and quintessential prophet 'like Moses.'

Elijah as a Miracle Worker

The Elijah cycle begins rather abruptly in 1 Kgs 17:1 with the prophet's surprising announcement to King Ahab of Israel that "there will be no dew or rain these years except by my word." Elijah's statement is startling because it portrays the prophet as one who controls the very forces of nature. There are few human beings in the biblical texts besides Elijah who are said to be capable of sending and withholding rain, or bringing down fire from heaven and raising the dead to life.[61] Throughout the ancient Near East, these powers were typically associated with figures of the heavenly and not the earthly realm. Although Elijah is sometimes called a "man of God" (איש אלהים) or the "servant of YHWH" (עבד יהוה) in these miracle stories, he is still a human being. The reader is well aware that the prophet acts as the deity's messenger and that YHWH is the ultimate source of the prophet's special powers. Yet the miracles associated with Elijah (and his successor Elisha) are unique because they are performed through the words and actions of an entirely human character, who, nevertheless, seems to possess divine capabilities.

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[61] Others include Joshua, who made the sun stand still in the sky for a whole day (Josh 10:12-14), and Samuel, who prayed to YHWH and thunder and rain came (1 Sam 12:16-18).

Elijah's act of withholding rain at the beginning of chapter 17 and his success in bringing about a great rainstorm at the conclusion of chapter 18 form a kind of *inclusio*. This renders some level of coherence to the numerous independent stories which constitute 1 Kgs 17-18 – some of which are only very loosely connected to the theme of the drought and return of the rain (e.g., 1 Kgs 17:17-24; 18:20-40). When reading 1 Kgs 17-18 as a unity, it becomes apparent that the climax of the overall narrative is Elijah's struggle with the 450 prophets of Baal on the top of Mt. Carmel in 18:20-40. Elijah's words and actions are meant to demonstrate to the people of Israel that YHWH alone is God and, conversely, that Baal, whom the people have also been worshiping, is utterly powerless. This anti-Baal polemic is made explicit in the contest story, but it is expressed more subtly in the different narrative units that comprise 1 Kgs 17-18. Each of the miracles which Elijah performs or with which he is associated both in these two chapters and elsewhere in the Elijah cycle is intimately connected with the powers usually ascribed to the deity Baal in the Ugaritic texts.

The Ugaritic texts depict Baal as the great storm god. The fertility of the land and the continuation of life on earth depend on the rain that he provides. In the Baal cycle or myth, Baal is frequently referred to as "Prince, Lord of the Earth" (*zbl b'l 'arṣ*). The deity even brags at one point about his supremacy: "for I alone will rule over the gods; I alone will fatten gods and men; I alone will satisfy the earth's masses" (KTU 1.4 VII 49-52). Since Baal is a storm god he is associated with a variety of meteorological phenomena, especially rain, lightning, thunder, wind and clouds. The first part of the Baal myth (KTU 1.1-2) narrates Baal's conflict with the god Yamm ("Sea"), whom he finally defeats with the help of two weapons – thunder and lightning – fashioned for him by the

divine craftsman.[62] Baal is then proclaimed king and he is expected to "fertilize with the luxuriance of his rain (*mṭrḥ*)," "sound his thunder (*qlḥ*) in the clouds," and "flash to the earth lightning."[63] In the third part of the cycle when Mot ("Death") is victorious over his brother Baal, Baal must descend into the Netherworld, thereby causing drought and infertility to prevail in the land. Baal is ordered to take along with him into Mot's realm his clouds, wind, storm and rain, and his three "daughters," one of whom is called Tallay ("Dew"). Dew is also connected with Baal and with fertility in the Aqhat text from Ugarit. After Aqhat is murdered, his father and king, Dan'il, curses aloud: "Seven years shall Baal fail; eight the Rider of the Clouds. There shall be no dew (*ṭl*), no rain, no surging of the two depths, no goodly sound of Baal's voice."

In 1 Kgs 17:1, Elijah withholds both the dew (טל) and the rain (מטר) – an act that leads to a severe three-year drought throughout the region (cf. 1 Kgs 18:1-2). After his victory over the prophets of Baal, Elijah causes the rains to return by climbing to the top of Mt. Carmel – possibly a sacred site of the Phoenician Baal – crouching on the ground and putting his face between his knees.[64] The prophet orders his servant to go and look toward the Sea seven times. After the seventh trip, the servant returns to report to Elijah that "a cloud

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[62] In a famous stele from Ugarit, Baal is pictured standing on top of mountains, the sea, or perhaps both. In his right hand is a weapon that looks like a club or mace, which most scholars believe resembles thunder. In the deity's left hand is a lightning-bolt whose top half resembles the branches of a tree or a stalk of grain; see J. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954) 168 fig. 490.

[63] KTU 1.4 V 6-9; Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle* (vol. 1; Leiden: Brill, 1994) 65-66.

[64] See H. O. Thompson, "Carmel, Mount," *ABD* 1:874-75 and J. Gray, *I & II Kings* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster) 351-52 for a brief discussion about the association of Mt. Carmel with the Phoenician worship of Baal. Also in the Baal myth, the gods lower their heads on top of their knees as a gesture of humility (KTU 1.2 I 23-24).

as small as a man's hand is rising from the Sea" (עלה מְיָם; 18:44).[65] Next, the sky darkens with clouds and there is wind and a great rainstorm. The numerous similarities between the language and imagery used in 1 Kgs 17:1 and 18:41-46 to describe Elijah's control over the fructifying rains and that found in the Ugaritic texts with regard to the theophany of Baal the storm-god are obvious.[66] The bringing of the rains to fertilize the earth, which was apparently considered by the Phoenicians and "all the Israelites" (18:20) to be the exclusive right of the deity Baal, is performed in 1 Kgs 17-18 by a mere mortal acting on behalf of YHWH. By taking this awesome and miraculous power out of the hands of the god and placing it in the hands of Elijah, the biblical writer has created a rather forceful and scathing criticism of Baal worship.

The motifs of the drought and the rainmaking are indirectly related to the contest story in 1 Kgs 18:20-40. The showdown on the top of Mt. Carmel between the one prophet of YHWH and the countless prophets of Baal appears to be an independent tradition, but as the text now stands Elijah's rainmaking activity in vv. 41-46 functions as the conclusion to the victory won by Elijah/YHWH.[67] As mentioned above, the anti-Baal polemic in the contest story is overt. The deity who will respond with fire to consume the offering is "*the* God" (הוא האלהים; 18:24). Elijah permits the priests of Baal to go first, but

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[65] Note, however, that the LXX has ἀνάγουσα ὕδωρ "bringing up water" (מעלה מָיִם).

[66] For a discussion of other biblical passages that employ the language and imagery of the storm-god Baal in their depictions of YHWH, see F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973) 147-94.

[67] 1 Kgs 18:20-40 may represent an independent tradition as there is no mention of, or concern for, the famine. On the contrary, there is plenty of water available to douse the altar with twelve jars of water (vv. 34-35).

despite their frenetic behavior and lacerating themselves with knives and spears, no fiery response from Baal is forthcoming. Elijah even taunts them by suggesting that their god may be absent or "asleep" (ישׁן), possibly meaning dead.[68] When it is Elijah's turn to prepare his offering, he seemingly stacks the odds against himself by having the altar thoroughly drenched with water. Unlike the opposition, Elijah simply prays to YHWH and immediately the "fire of YHWH" (אשׁ יהוה) falls and consumes everything – the offering, the wood, the stones, the dust and the water (v. 38). Having witnessed this spectacular scene, all the people throw themselves to the ground and shout aloud, "YHWH alone is God! YHWH alone is God!"

Elijah is the only human character in the Hebrew Scriptures capable of calling down fire from heaven at will.[69] Fire is frequently associated with the Israelite God in many biblical texts and is often symbolic of his "glory" or presence.[70] One is likely to equate the fire of YHWH that fell to consume the offering in 1 Kgs 18:38 with lightning, which may be thought of as a kind of 'fire from heaven' (cf. Job 1:16).[71] In fact, divine fire and lightning are coupled

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[68] Klaas Spronk [*Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (AOAT 219; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986) 245-46] points out that El 's reaction to hearing the news about the death of Baal involved an act of self-laceration (cf. KTU 1.5 VI 11-22). Spronk proposes that cutting oneself may have played a part in cultic rituals of mourning for Baal and he takes the word ישׁן in 18:27 to be referring to the "sleep of death." Mark Smith, however, disagrees with this kind of interpretation; *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, 70-71.

[69] But see the story in Judg 6:11-24, where an angel/messenger of YHWH causes fire to spring forth from a rock and consume Gideon's sacrifice. Note the similarities here to the story of the contest on Mt. Carmel.

[70] E.g., Exod 3:2; 19:18; Deut 4:36; Ezek 1:4.

[71] See L. Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha as Polemics against Baal Worship* (Pretoria Oriental Series vol. 6; Leiden: Brill, 1968) 56.

together in a number of passages that describe YHWH. Ezekiel had a vision of God in which he saw something that looked like burning coals of fire from which lightning issued forth (Ezek 1:13). In Psalm 97:3-4, fire is said to go before YHWH while "his lightnings illuminate the world." But the clearest example of both fire and lightning accompanying YHWH's theophany is 2 Sam 22 (= Ps 18):

> Smoke rose from his nostrils,
> From his mouth came devouring fire;
> Coals blazed forth from him.
> He spread apart the heavens and descended,
> A storm cloud beneath his feet.
> He mounted a cherub and flew;
> He was seen on the wings of the wind.
> He set darkness round about him,
> His pavilion is the raincloud.
> Cloud-banks were before him,
> Before him his clouds raced by,
> Hail and coals of fire.
> From the heavens YHWH thundered,
> The Most High gave forth his voice.
> He let fly his shafts and scattered them,
> Lightnings he flashed and routed them (vv. 9-15).

That this psalm contains the imagery of the storm-god Baal is undeniable.[72] Lightning is fire from heaven and it is part of the storm-god theophany. The contest on Mt. Carmel between YHWH and Baal is to determine which deity rules supreme over the forces of nature associated with the storm. By calling down fire from heaven Elijah performs a miracle which undermines a popular belief that it is Baal who has dominion over these elements.[73] Thus, the account of Elijah's rainmaking in 18:41-46 may be viewed as a fitting conclusion to the contest story.

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[72] See especially, Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 158-59.

[73] Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 62.

Fire is certainly a prominent motif in the Elijah narratives. Twice more the prophet performs the miracle of calling down fire from heaven in the narrative about Ahaziah's illness in 2 Kgs 1. Both times the "man of God" (איש אלהים) uses the "fire of God" (אש אלהים) as a lethal weapon against Ahaziah's militiamen (cf. 1:10, 12). Like his father Ahab, Ahaziah is a worshiper of Baal. When the King of Israel accidently falls from the upper chamber of his palace, he seeks healing from Baal-zebub ("Baal of the Flies"), whose name is either an ironic wordplay on Baal-zebul ("Prince Baal") or is related instead to Ugaritic *dbb*, meaning "flame."[74] If the latter proposal is correct, it "might suggest that Ahaziah seeks out a kind of Canaanite firepower only to provoke Elijah's/YHWH's consuming fire from heaven."[75] As a punishment for his apostasy, Ahaziah is condemned to die just like all those who persisted in serving Baal instead of YHWH (cf. 1 Kgs 18:40; 22:37-38; 2 Kgs 1:17; 9:24, 36-37; 10:25).

Along with fire and other meteorological phenomena, the motif of the chariot-riding warrior is also common in Ugaritic and Israelite accounts of storm-god theophanies. One of the many epithets of Baal is the "Rider of the Clouds" (*rkb ʿrpt*) and the notion of Baal riding on a winged war chariot is implicit in at least one of the references to the deity's stormy entourage (Ugaritic *mdl*; KTU 1.5

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[74] F. C. Fensham, "A Possible Explanation of the Name Baal-zebub of Ekron," *ZAW* 79 (1967) 361-64. The root *dbb* occurs only once in the extant Ugaritic texts (Anat III 42-43), though never as a title for Baal. However, the word is in parallelism with *išt* ("fire") and both are used as epithets of Anat/El.

[75] B. O. Long, *2 Kings* (FOTL 10; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991) 17.

V 6-11).[76] This motif of the chariot-riding warrior, which originally pertained to Baal, also accrued to YHWH. There are numerous references or allusions in the biblical texts to YHWH's divine storm chariot. In Psalm 77, for example, it is said that YHWH's thunder "rumbled like wheels" and his "lightning lit up the world" (v. 19). Second (or Third) Isaiah predicts that "YHWH will come in fire – his chariots like a whirlwind" (66:15). Habakkuk 3:8, 15 mention both the chariot of God and its horses:

> Was your wrath against the rivers, O YHWH?
> Was your anger against the rivers,
> Your rage against the sea –
> When you rode upon your horses,
> Upon your chariot of victory?
> You trampled the sea with your horses,
> Stirring the mighty waters.

Fiery chariots and horses of fire appear in 2 Kgs 2:11 when Elijah is miraculously taken up to heaven in a "whirlwind" (סערה). Verse 1 of the text explicitly states that it was YHWH who took up Elijah in the whirlwind, and elsewhere in the Hebrew scriptures God is said to appear in the stormwind or סערה (cf. Nah 1:3; Zech 9:14; Ezek 1:4; Ps 18:11; 50:3).[77] The horses and chariots of fire are also mentioned in connection with Elisha in 2 Kgs 6:17, where they are clearly a sign from heaven.[78]

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[76] M. S. Smith, *The Early History of God. Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990) 50. See also J. C. Greenfield, "Ugaritic *mdl* and Its Cognates," *Biblica* 45 (1964) 527-29.

[77] See Chapter 7 (pp. 147-94) of Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, who discusses how very early the image of YHWH as storm god was in ancient Israel.

[78] Smith, *The Early History of God*, 50; Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 259.

It has been argued by Leah Bronner that Elijah's ascension was meant to show that YHWH is the only God who rules over the clouds and that Baal has not the power to ascend the clouds when he dies.[79] Spronk, however, disagrees with Bronner's arguments and declares that it is unlikely that Elijah would ever have been compared to Baal.[80] What has been clearly demonstrated up to this point in our discussion is how much YHWH, and not Elijah, was depicted like the storm-god Baal. In this respect, Spronk is correct to point out that it would be rather odd to find that Elijah's ascension had been modeled after Baal's resurrection, so as to equate the two figures. Spronk argues that Elijah's assumption can be compared with what is said in the Ugaritic literature about the prominent dead or deified human beings called *rp'um*, who travel on chariots (cf. KTU 1.20 II 2-4) and are called "warriors of Baal and Anat" (KTU 1.22 I 8-9).[81] After having seen Elijah's ascent in the whirlwind, Elisha cried out: "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its cavalry!" (2:12). The same title is found in 2 Kgs 13:14 just when Elisha is about to die. The word for "cavalry" (פָּרָשׁ) in this title has been shown to be a technical term for the war-horses that go before the war-chariots.[82] Thus when Elisha saw the chariots and horses of fire as his master was being taken up to heaven, he realized that they were the heavenly host of YHWH and that Elijah was indeed one of them. The title is an indication

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[79] Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 127.

[80] Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 263.

[81] Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 260-61.

[82] K. Galling, "Der Ehrenname Elisas und die Entrückung Elias," *ZThK* 53 (1956) 134-35. See also A. Schmitt, *Entrückung – Aufnahme – Himmelfahrt. Untersuchungen zu einem Vorstellungsbereich im Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1973) 114-16.

of the state of Elijah and Elisha after their assumption/death – that is, that they shall become members of the heavenly host.[83]

Baal is the preserver and savior of life in the cosmos according to the Ugaritic texts, yet all who worship him in the Elijah narratives instead experience death. In the Baal cycle, Baal's struggles with Yamm and Mot represent the conflict between life and death. The continuation of human life is threatened when Baal dies at the hands of Mot and descends into the Netherworld: "Baal is dead! What of the people? The son of Dagan! What of the multitudes?" (KTU 1.5 V 23-24; 1.6 I 6-7). Without the existence of the storm god, the fertilizing rains no longer fall and the bounty of the earth withers and dies. But after the goddess Anat destroys Mot, Baal is revivified and he returns to his heavenly throne to reassert his power. Then, the heavens again rained down oil and the wadis ran with honey (KTU 1.6 III 6-9).

Baal's resurrection from the dead might imply that the deity also had the power to revivify others, although this is nowhere explicitly stated in the Ugaritic literature. A passage from the Aqhat text has been used to support the notion of Baal's ability to raise others (particularly the *rp'um*) from the dead.[84] In this particular text, the goddess Anat is jealous of a bow made by the divine craftsman which was given to the mortal Aqhat. Anat tries to seduce Aqhat into giving up the bow by offering him eternal life:

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[83] Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 260-61. Spronk also notes that the name "YHWH צבאות" in the book of Kings is only used by Elijah and Elisha (cf. 1 Kgs 18:15; 19:10, 14; 2 Kgs 3:14). Elsewhere in the Dtr History, the name occurs 11 times in 1-2 Samuel (cf. 1 Sam 1:3, 11; 4:4; 7:27; 15:2; 17:45; 2 Sam 5:10; 6:2, 18; 7:8, 26). It is entirely absent from the Pentateuch. The bulk of the attestations of the term in the scriptures, however, are clustered in books representing a tradition linked to the theology fostered at the Jerusalem Temple: Proto-Isaiah (56 times), Hag (14 times), Zech (53 times), Mal (24 times), Pss (15 times).

[84] Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 116; Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 151-52, 161-96.

"Ask for life, O hero Aqhat,
ask for life and I will give it to you,
immortality and I will bestow it upon you.
I will let you count with Baal the years,
with the sons of El you will count the months.
Just as Baal when he brings to life (*kyḥwy*) is served,
did he bring to life (*ḥwy*), then one serves and gives him to drink,
there improvises and sings before him
a gracious lad [who] answers his (wishes),
so I too can bring to life (*'aḥwy*) [the he]ro Aqhat"
(KTU 1.17 VI 26-33).[85]

But Aqhat refuses the goddess' gift, which leads Anat to command her henchman Yatpan to murder Aqhat so that she could claim the coveted bow. The text breaks off shortly after Aqhat is murdered, though many scholars believe that it would have gone on to describe how Anat restored Aqhat to life – an ability which she claimed to possess just like her consort Baal.[86] However, this interpretation of the above-cited passage is a controversial one because the form of the verbs *yḥwy* and *ḥwy* in line 30 may be either D-stem active or passive. The line could, therefore, be translated as follows: "Like Baal when he is revived, he is served – (when) he is revived, one serves and gives him drink."[87] The form of the verb *'aḥwy* in line 32, which can only be translated as an active D-stem, might mean that the verbs in line 30 should also be read as active forms, though it must recalled that nowhere in the extant Ugaritic texts does Baal or Anat actually resurrect someone from the dead. What we can say about the accounts of Elijah raising the widow's son to life in 1 Kgs 17:17-24 and his multiplying the

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[85] This is Spronk's translation; *Beatific Afterlife*, 151-52.

[86] See Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 151-55; Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha*, 119; and M. D. Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan* (Louisville: Westminster, 1978) 31.

[87] Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, 65.

meal and oil in 17:8-16 is that these legends are meant to demonstrate that it is YHWH and not Baal who controls life and death.

EXCURSUS: The Assumption of Elijah

Elijah's ascension is a unique event in the Hebrew scriptures. The normal fate, even of great heroes like Abraham, Moses and David, is death or "rest" in Sheol (Gen 25:7-9; Deut 34:6; 1 Kgs 2:10). But there is one other figure in the Hebrew Bible who is reported to have been "taken" by God and that is Enoch in Gen 5:24. Although the account of Elijah's assumption is more clearly stated than that of Enoch's, both texts are somewhat ambiguously worded. As a result, the heavenly ascent of both characters has sometimes been denied or doubted by modern and ancient readers of the texts alike.[88] Elijah's ascension in the whirlwind may be viewed, then, by dissenters not as a removal from this world, but as a "retirement" to some remote place within it (e.g., paradise, cf. Jub 4:23; or a place for the elect and righteous ones; cf. *1 Enoch* 70).[89] Part of the problem is that Elijah's assumption is described in different ways. In 2 Kgs 2:1 and 11, Elijah "went up/was brought up" (עלה) in the whirlwind "to heaven/sky" (השמים). But in verses 3 and 5, the sons of the prophets ask Elisha if he knows that today YHWH will "take" (לקח) Elijah "from above your head" (מעל ראשך). Elijah himself uses the verb לקח ("take") twice to describe his

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[88] Consider the LXX of 2 Kgs 2:1, 11 – that Elijah went up "as if to heaven" (ὡς εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν). Cf. John 3:13; 8:52-53. For other examples, see C. Houtman, "Elijah," *DDD*, 283-84.

[89] J. D. Tabor, "Heaven, Ascent to," *ABD* 3:91.

anticipated fate (2:9, 10). Then, the same sons of the prophets as before speak differently of the event after it has taken place, by suggesting that the spirit of YHWH (רוח יהוה) may have "lifted him up" (נשׂאו) and "cast him" (וישׁלכהו) onto some mountain or into some valley (2:16).

The expression עלה השׁמים ("to go up/bring up to heaven") is perhaps the least problematic. As Armin Schmitt explains, it is a formula that is frequently used in ancient Near Eastern literature to talk about gods and goddesses, and sometimes exceptional human beings who have a special relationship with the gods, ascending to heaven.[90] The use of נשׂא and שׁלח ("to lift up," "to throw, cast") by the sons of the prophets in 2:16 is also clear in its intended meaning because it appears to be more in line with Ezek 3:12, 14 and 8:3, where the spirit of YHWH simply transported the prophet within and not from this world (cf. 1 Kgs 18:12). The questions posed by the disciples in vv. 3, 5 should be understood in the same manner. The use of the verb לקח ("to take") by Elijah in vv. 9, 10 is the most problematic because it permits of various interpretations.[91] The same verb is used in Gen 5:24 by the Priestly writer to state that God "took" Enoch and "he was no more." It is true that the wording of this verse is merely suggestive of Enoch's removal from this world. However, it has been shown that the Priestly-writer's portrait of Enoch in Gen 5:21-24 was drawn from Mesopotamian traditions. The tradition about the seventh antediluvian king, Enmeduranki, who was taught divinatory rites by the sun god and who sat in the presence of the gods, and about Enmeduranki's counselor,

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[90] Schmitt, *Entrückung – Aufnahme – Himmelfahrt*, 109.

[91] Many scholars regard לקח as a *terminus technicus* for translation from the earth to an otherworldly life. But see the discussion in Schmitt, *Entrückung – Aufnahme – Himmelfahrt*, 85-87, 165-67.

Utuabzu, of whom it is also said that he ascended into heaven, is particularly telling here.[92]

The destiny of Enoch and Elijah is unique and special. It is in no way typical of the fate of individuals (even of great heroes) in the traditions of ancient Israel or those of other ancient Near Eastern societies. To be taken up is exceptional and is a great honor. It only happens to extraordinary mortals and those who are considered to be pious men and the favorite of the gods (e.g., Adapa, Etana, Enmeduranki).[93] By ascension immortality and a divine status are often acquired. This seems to be the case with both Enoch and Elijah. It is said of Enoch that he "walked with האלהים (either God or 'the angels')" during his life (v. 22) and after his death (v. 24). Elijah, as mentioned above, appears to have joined the heavenly host of YHWH when he ascended in the whirlwind amidst the chariots and horses of fire. Among the heavenly beings the person in question lives on. So he can be a helper for people on earth, and from his exalted position he can return to earth.[94]

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[92] See J. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition* (CBQMS 16; Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984) 33-51; and R. Borger, "Die Beschwörungsserie *Bīt Mēseri* und die Himmelfahrt Henochs," *JNES* 33 (1974) 192-93.

[93] See Schmitt, *Entrückung – Aufnahme – Himmelfahrt*, 24-31.

[94] For other characteristic traits of ascension traditons, see Houtman, "Elijah," 283.

Elijah as Zealot

After having killed the prophets of Baal at the Wadi Kishon, Elijah had to flee from Jezebel into the desert. He complained twice to God on Mt. Horeb (1 Kgs 19:10, 14):

> I have been exceedingly zealous (קַנֹּא קִנֵּאתִי) for YHWH, the God of Hosts; for the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to the sword. I alone am left, and they seek my life to take it away.

The word קנא in the causative, "to be or to make zealous," and its adjectival and substantive forms, קַנָּא, קַנּוֹא and קִנְאָה, may denote both jealousy in the sphere of human relationships and the attitude of God towards his people.[95] Zeal is behavior motivated by the desire to protect one's self, group, space, or time against violations.[96] The adjectives קַנָּא and קַנּוֹא are only applied to God and they are found in passages that are especially significant for the revelation of God to his people: the two decalogues (Exod 20:5; Deut 5:9) and Exod 34 (v. 14) and the report of the assembly at Shechem (Josh 24:19). As expressed in the first commandment, YHWH is a jealous/zealous God who requires the allegiance of the people. Because God's holiness will not tolerate idolatry or other violations against the covenant, God will punish the whole nation for such offenses unless someone acts on behalf of God – zealous with God's jealous anger – to kill or root out the offenders.

The first example of such zeal for YHWH is Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron. When God put the Israelites under a plague for their idolatrous relations

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[95] See BDB, 888.

[96] D. Rhoads, "Zealots," *ABD* 6.1044.

with the Moabites, Phinehas discovered Zimri in the act of sexual intercourse with a Midianite/Moabite woman and, "zealous for his God," stepped in on behalf of God and killed them both with a single spear thrust (Num 25:1-8). God removed the plague from the land and rewarded Phinehas with the covenant of a perpetual priesthood for his descendants (Num 25:12-13). The features of this model of piety included a lone individual, filled with the fire to act in a spontaneous and unofficial manner, expressing the jealous anger of YHWH against an act of idolatry committed by a fellow Israelite. The zealous behavior "made atonement for the people" by ridding the land of an uncleanness and turned back God's wrath so that God "did not consume the people of Israel."

Like Phinehas, Elijah had been zealous in God's place and had opposed Israel's defection, but God had not confirmed his action. Instead, YHWH promised Elijah that the faithless Israelites would be punished and his judgment would be carried out by the swords of Hazael and Jehu, both of whom were later to be anointed king, and by Elijah's successor Elisha (1 Kgs 19:17-18). Jehu, one of the instruments of this divine judgment, was another zealot for YHWH. On the way to Samaria, he called Jehonadab the son of Rechab to him and said: "Come with me and see my zeal for YHWH" (2 Kgs 10:16). This zeal was manifested in his putting to the sword all Ahab's descendants and every worshiper of Baal. Like Phinehas, Jehu had also received a special promise from God for this – four generations of Jehu's descendants will occupy the throne of Israel (2 Kgs 10:30). Finally, it is important to mention the tribe of Levi in this context. It is true that the concept of "zeal" does not appear directly in this tradition, but it is materially contained in it. After the people of Israel had gone astray in their worship of the image of the golden calf, the tribe of Levi

responded as one man to Moses' call and put everyone to the sword without regard to family or blood relationships (Exod 32:26-29). In this case, too, a divine promise was given as a reward (cf. Deut 33:8-11).[97]

Thus, if an individual was inspired by "zeal for YHWH," he could act as YHWH's representative and carry out his judgment by putting his faithless fellow-Israelites to the sword. To do this could avert further punishment. YHWH's response to this zeal for his honor and holiness usually took the form of a special promise or reward for the zealot. Elijah acted as YHWH's representative when he spontaneously and voluntarily took on God's jealous anger at the Wadi Kishon. Elijah's extermination of the violators of God's holiness served to turn back God's wrath, at least temporarily. Immediately after the slaughter of the Baal prophets the rains came, which ended the severe, three-year-long drought (1 Kgs 18:41-45). All the other 'zealots' in the Bible except for Elijah received some special promise or reward for their anger. Elijah was merely promised by YHWH that the rest of the Israelite offenders would be punished, but Elijah would not be the one to carry out this vengeance (1 Kgs 19:15-18). Later on in the Second Temple period, Elijah's ascension to heaven came to be regarded by some as the prophet's reward for his zeal (cf. 1 Macc 2:58). This view, however, is not to be found in the Kings narratives, for we have already seen that the prophet's ascension was not connected in any way with his "zeal for YHWH" or his slaughter of the 450 prophets of Baal.

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[97] M. Hengel, *The Zealots* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989) 148.

Elijah as a "Second Moses"

Numerous points of similarity exist between the figures of Elijah and Moses, some of which have already been mentioned in the course of our review of scholarship on the prophetic narratives.[98] Allusions to the Exodus, Wilderness and Sinai traditions abound in the legends which comprise 1 Kgs 17-19 and 2 Kgs 2, but are wholly lacking in the later stories found in 1 Kgs 21 and 2 Kgs 1. Undoubtedly, a conscious effort was made by the (preexilic) authors and editors of these stories to depict Elijah as the new Moses. Elijah is a prophet who, like Moses, appears at a critical juncture in Israel's history and saves the people from disaster and persecution. The geographical framework of the stories in 1 Kgs 17-19 recalls that of Moses' wanderings, as Jerome Walsh has noted:

> Each prophet begins his journey with a flight eastward to escape a king's wrath; each lodges with a family. Each returns to his country to face and challenge the king, and to awaken faith among the Israelites. Each leaves the country again on a journey to Sinai/Horeb, where he experiences a theophany. Each then departs for Israel via Transjordan.[99]

The daily provisions of bread and meat brought to Elijah by ravens in 17:2-6 recall the provisions of meat and manna for Moses and the Israelites in Exod 16:8, 12. Elijah's altar of twelve stones on Mt. Carmel (18:31) resembles Moses' altar of twelve stones at Sinai (Exod 24:4). After building the altar, Elijah invokes the memory of the patriarchs with the unusual sequence "Abraham, Isaac and

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[98] The allusions to Moses have been pointed out by a number of scholars. See especially, Fohrer, *Elia*, 55-57; Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 192-94; and Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah*, 133-39.

[99] J. T. Walsh, "Elijah," *ABD* 2:464.

Israel" (18:36) – a phrase which is spoken only by Moses in Exod 32:13. Elijah's conflict with the prophets of Baal is like Moses' competition with the Egyptian magicians. The contest on Mt. Carmel leads to the people professing their faith in YHWH and the subsequent slaughter of every idolater (1 Kgs 18:39-40). At Sinai, too, Moses rallies to himself those who are for YHWH and leads the Levites in a massacre of every worshiper of the golden calf (Exod 32:26-27). It is by no means clear, however, that all of the Moses legends are earlier than the Elijah stories that resemble them. It is possible that some of the influence could have gone the other way; certain aspects of the Elijah legends may have played a part in shaping the Moses legends.

The Mosaic allusions in 1 Kgs 19 and 2 Kgs 2 are the most noticeable and striking. Elijah fasts for forty days and nights (19:8), as did Moses (Exod 34:28). Elijah begs for YHWH to end his life (19:4), as did Moses (Num 11:15). The angel of the Lord appeared at a bush in the wilderness to Elijah and Moses (19:5; Exod 3:2). Elijah stationed himself in a cave and hid his face while the presence of the Lord passed by (19:9-13), and Moses stationed himself on a rock while YHWH shielded him with his hand as the divine presence passed by (Exod 33:21-22). Both prophets witness similar kinds of phenomena associated with YHWH's theophany while atop Mt. Horeb (19:11-12; Exod 19:16-19). Just as Joshua ministered to Moses, so does Elisha minister to the needs of Elijah (19:21; Exod 24:13; 33:11; Num 11:28). Joshua divided the Jordan (Josh 3:14-16) as Moses divided the sea (Exod 14:21-22). And in 2 Kgs 2, Elisha divides the Jordan as Elijah had done (vv. 8, 14). Elijah's ascension to heaven on the other side of the Jordan (2:11-12) is reminiscent of Moses' death and secret burial east of Jericho

(Deut 34:5-8). The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha (2:15) as Joshua possesses the spirit and is invested with Moses' authority (Num 27:18-20).

Although the Mosaic parallels are absent in the Naboth and Ahaziah narratives, the portrait of Elijah in these two stories is not in any way un-Moses-like, because Moses' prophetic role lay in being a spokesman for YHWH. He mediated the covenant to Israel at Sinai and spoke the word of YHWH to the people there. It is in this sense that Moses was considered to be the prototypical prophet and this notion is nowhere more clearly stated than in the book of Deuteronomy. There are two passages in Deuteronomy that deal with the subject of prophecy in Israel, 13:1-6 and 18:15-22. The first of these two texts begins with an introduction in 12:29-31 warning of the dangers and dire consequences of worshipping other gods in manner of the nations. This is immediately followed by the first words on the role of the prophet, and these are couched as a negative principle, namely, that any prophet who encourages idolatry must not be listened to. Indeed it is prescribed that such prophets should be put to death for advocating apostasy from the covenant and disobedience to the law of the Lord. It is taken for granted that there will be a variety of prophets and dream-diviners in Israel with rival messages that they can support with signs and wonders. But as far as Deuteronomy is concerned, such signs and wonders alone are not reliable indicators of a true prophet; rather the acid test for a prophet is whether or not his message is in harmony with the law.

The second passage on prophecy (Deut 18:15-22) is part of a section dealing with authority in Israel (16:18-18:22), which refers to judges, priests, kings and prophets. All of these are seen as having a socio-religious

responsibility for maintaining a pure covenant faith among the people by word and example. The judges and the levitical priests must judge the people with righteous judgment according to the law and the king is expected to set an example by having his own copy of the law which he must study and observe faithfully. Just before the regulations for the prophet, which concludes this entire section, is a passage warning the people not to consult the divine using the ways of the nations – that is, child sacrifice, divination, soothsayer, augur, sorcerer, charmer, medium, wizard and necromancer (18:9-14). All these are associated with idolatry. Instead, the people are informed by Moses that "the Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet from among your own people, like myself; him you shall heed" (18:15). If anybody fails to obey the words that the prophet 'like Moses' speaks in the name of the Lord, the deity himself will call that person to account (v. 19). At the same time the prophet who speaks words not received from the Lord, or speaks in the name of gods other than YHWH, he is to be put to death. The only way in which the people can know if a prophet truly speaks in the name of YHWH is if the oracles he pronounces come true (v. 22).

Thus, the essential point in Deuteronomy's regulations for the prophet is the demand that the authenticity of any prophet arising in Israel should be proved by his functioning as a mouthpiece for the words of YHWH. In so far as the prophet declared the word of YHWH he was a true Mosaic prophet. The performance of signs and wonders is not by itself a reliable indicator of a true prophet. Although the Deuteronomic statements on prophecy post-date most of the Elijah legends, it is important to have considered them since the character of Elijah was later viewed according to this standard. Elijah is the quintessential prophet 'like Moses' not only because certain aspects of his career and deeds

recall those of Moses', but also because he was a spokesman for YHWH and because all the oracles he pronounced did come true. Elijah acts as a proper authoritative figure for Israel in that he sets an example for the people both ethically and religiously. Elijah reveres the Lord and faithfully observes his commandments. Loyalty to YHWH alone and concern for the purity of the covenant are central elements of Elijah's character and of what he demands from the people.

Conclusion

A close reading of the stories about Elijah in the book of Kings has revealed a truly complex history of development and a plurality of characterizations of the prophet. Above all, Elijah is portrayed in every legend about him, save the Naboth tale, as a miracle worker or holy man. In this role, he is endowed with superhuman powers that make him almost god-like as they enable him to control the forces of nature, command the heavens at will, conquer death and become a savior to the living. A comparison between the Elijah narratives and the texts from Ugarit has shown that each of the miracles which the prophet performs or with which he is associated is intimately connected with the powers usually ascribed to the great storm-god Baal. It is hardly the case that Elijah is being equated with the Canaanite deity; rather, it is YHWH who is pitted against Baal and Elijah is the messenger or means through which YHWH speaks and acts. In this capacity he is imbued with the powers of the god he combats. Elijah's ascension to heaven amid the war-chariots and war-horses of fire indicates that

the prophet joined YHWH's heavenly army, just as the prominent dead became warriors of Baal in the Ugaritic literature.

Many of the wonders associated with Elijah in these legends are purposely reminiscent of similar ones involving Moses. Both prophets miraculously supply (and are supplied with) food or sustenance, experience a theophany atop God's mountain, divide bodies of water so as to cross through dryshod, and pass on their spirits to a worthy successor. In this role as a new Moses, Elijah not only performs wonders but also serves as YHWH's spokesman and acts as a mediator between the divine and human realms. The depictions of Elijah as a miracle worker and as a prophet like Moses are indeed complementary in most of the Kings material. Only the Deuteronomistic author-redactor seems to have had some difficulty in accepting that part of the Elijah tradition which cast the prophet in the role of wonder worker. Thus we find that the Dtr author reduces the image of Elijah to that of a mere announcer of oracles against the royal house (1 Kgs 21:20-24). Elijah is no longer an exceptional figure in this new role. He is no different from other prophets such as Ahijah and Jehu ben Hanani, who also pronounced oracles of doom before the king. But this much-diminished view of the prophet disappears from the growing tradition about Elijah almost as quickly as it came. It resurfaces again only in the book of Chronicles and then vanishes; for, naturally, with the demise of the monarchy there is no longer any need for prophets to serve this function.

We shall briefly consider the Chronicler's depiction of Elijah in the next chapter before moving on to examine those passages in the book of Malachi that will radically and permanently reshape the prophet's image. From the book of Malachi forward, both the miraculous and Moses-like qualities of the prophet

will dominate the Elijah tradition. Aspects of his zeal for God, particularly in actions that will serve to defend God's honor but also to diffuse divine anger and bring about expiation for Israel and avert further punishment, will also be present.

CHAPTER 2

Elijah in the Books of Chronicles and Malachi

Outside of the Elijah-Elisha cycle in 1-2 Kings, the prophet Elijah is mentioned only twice more in the Hebrew Scriptures. One of the references to him may be found in the book of Chronicles, the other at the end of the book of Malachi. Both texts originated in the postexilic period but their portrayals of the prophet differ in some very significant ways from one another. In the Chronicles passage, Elijah is not even a figure on the stage, so to speak. Only a letter from the prophet communicates his words to the audience. Elijah is also not personally present in the Malachi passage, yet the promise of his future return to earth is made. The Malachi passage is an innovation and indicates that a radical typological shift has taken place in the basic understanding of the prophet and his purpose. Elijah is no longer regarded as the miracle-working and doom-saying prophet of Israel's past but as the precursor of the eschatological Day of the Lord.

Elijah in the Book of Chronicles

The pericope containing Elijah's letter may be found in 2 Chronicles 21, which records the history of King Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat of Judah. The history of

Jehoram is based on material found in 2 Kgs 8:16-24, which the Chronicler adopts with light changes and the omission of two verses (16, 23). Rather than presenting it in a single sequence, the Chronicler places the borrowed material at the beginning, middle and end of the present story (vv. 1, 5-10a, 20a, 22:1b). The addition of the intermediate sections, in vv. 2-4, 10b-19, 20b and 22:1a, brings the Jehoram narrative to three times its original scope. The literary structure of the chapter is determined throughout by its underlying theological logic. As Sara Japhet explains, "the tight sequence (sin – punishment – further sin – warning – realization of warning – conclusion) reflects the almost iron-bound theological system of the Chronicler's most basic convictions."[1] The Chronicler, in other words, holds a strong notion of divine justice that is intimately linked to his portrayal of history. Human acts must receive retribution from God. Reward or punishment is mandatory, immediate and individual. However, it is important to note that this retribution is not mechanistic or inescapable. A king like Rehoboam who repents experiences some deliverance and is not completely destroyed (cf. 2 Chr 12:7, 12). In fact, warning before punishment, always by "prophets" or inspired "messengers," is regarded in Chronicles not merely as an option, but as a mandatory element in the judicial procedure.[2] Man is always offered a chance to repent, and God does not fail to react to repentance.

The narrative proper begins with Jehoram, the firstborn son of Jehoshaphat, being appointed ruler of Judah. His first steps as king involve the

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[1] S. Japhet, *I & II Chronicles* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1993) 806.

[2] M. Throntveit notes that the ten prophetic speeches between Abijah's sermon in 2 Chr 13 and Hezekiah's appeal to the North in 2 Chr 30 all enunciate the doctrine of retributive justice; *When Kings Speak: Royal Speech and Royal Prayer in Chronicles* (SBLDS 93; Atlanta: Scholars, 1987) 127-29.

cold-blooded murdering of all six of his brothers. Next, we are informed that Jehoram "walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, for he married the daughter of Ahab" (v. 6). In other words, Jehoram introduced Baal-worship in Judah. As punishment for his sins, the Edomites (and Libnah) rebelled against Judah's rule and set up a king of their own (vv. 7-10). But Jehoram sins further still by setting up "high places" in the hill country of Judah and intentionally leading the people of Judah astray (v. 11).[3] It is at this point in the narrative that the prophet is commissioned to warn/condemn the king. The letter from Elijah in vv. 12-15 is a direct response to Jehoram's transgressions:

> A letter from Elijah the prophet came to him which read, 'Thus says the Lord God of David, *your father*: Since you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat, *your father*, and the ways of King Asa of Judah, but have walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, leading astray Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem as the house of Ahab led them astray, and have also killed *your brothers of your father's house*, who were better than you, therefore, the Lord will inflict a great blow upon *your people, your sons, and your wives and all your possessions*. As for you, you will be severely stricken with a disorder of the bowels year after year until your bowels drop out.'

The letter opens with the standard formula "Thus says the Lord," but with the added emphatic reference "the God of David your father." This is already an indication of some of the prophecy's salient points. An antithesis is immediately evoked between "the house of David," Jehoram's affiliation through his father, and "the house of Ahab," his affiliation through his wife. Moreover, "David

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[3] The sense of the verb נדח in the causative is "to compel, force, thrust aside." Thus it would seem that Jehoram compelled his people to practice idolatry or intentionally led them astray. Note that the verb used in Elijah's letter (v. 13) to describe the same act is זנה in the causative, that is, "to cause to commit fornication."

your father" is followed by "Jehoshaphat your father," and "your brothers of your father's house" – a point of great significance. Note the emphatic familial context of Jehoram's three sins: they are first and foremost a betrayal of his own family. The most elementary of a man's obligations, loyalty to his own kindred, his "father's house," has been abandoned by Jehoram in favor of the "house of Ahab" – a foreign allegiance, resulting in the terrible massacre of his brothers and the violating of his own people. The predicted punishment, like the sin, is also described in familial and personal terms: your sons, your wives, and your possessions.[4] The crimes committed by the king against his "house" are punished by injuries to his body, his possessions and his near kin.

The choice of Elijah for the task of warning or condemning the king is self-evident. The renowned "troubler of Israel" (1 Kgs 18:17), zealously engaged in combating Baal worship in Ahab's realm, is also Jehoram's contemporary. The gravity of Jehoram's sins also demands a prophetic figure of Elijah's caliber. Two difficult points, however, remain. The first is chronological: were Jehoram and Elijah indeed contemporaries? If we go by the layout of the book of Kings, the issue is a confusing one, indeed. According to 2 Kgs 1:17, it would appear that Elijah and Jehoram were contemporaries. But the account of Elijah's translation to heaven immediately follows in 2 Kgs 2. Next, 2 Kgs 3:11 records Jehoshaphat of Judah inquiring whether there are any prophets of YHWH around who could advise the kings. One of his courtiers responds with the name of Elisha, Elijah's successor. And of course, the history of Jehoram of Judah is not told until 2 Kgs 8, interspersed as it is among the Elisha narratives. These

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[4] Because of the emphasis on family here, Japhet sees in עמך (v. 17) a reference not to "your people," but to "your family;" *I & II Chronicles*, 814.

inconsistencies are only an issue if one reads Chronicles in the context of 2 Kings. Nevertheless, this problem of timing has been connected with the second difficulty: why did the Chronicler not have Elijah appear before Jehoram in person? Why the choice of a letter? None of the other prophets in Chronicles communicates the word of God via a letter. Some scholars would combine both difficulties and explain that the letter was written before Elijah's ascension and sent in due course, or even transmitted as a "letter from heaven."[5] This last suggestion is not supported by the text, for Chronicles never posits a movement between this world and the next.

A letter for communicating prophecy is not unknown in the scriptures. The prophet Jeremiah writes a prophetic threat of judgment on a scroll (Jer 36:5-7) and also sends a prophecy of hope by letter to the exiles in Babylon (Jer 29). The use of a letter instead of a speech may be indicative of the transition from oral prophecy to written prophecy in the postexilic period. Perhaps the Chronicler uses the medium of a letter because it was implausible that Elijah should go into the royal palace in Jerusalem to proclaim the judgment in person.[6] In addition, we should keep in mind that the Chronicler also ascribed to the prophets the writing of history – a function for which there is no precedence in the Bible. Historiography is regarded as an inspired task, and in each generation there are prophets who record the events of the period (cf. 1 Chr 29:29; 2 Chr 9:29; 12:15; 13:22; 20:34; 26:22; 32:32; 33:19). It is not specifically stated that Elijah was one of those prophets who wrote history, but the Chronicler's view of the

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[5] See W. Rudolph, *Chronickbücher* (HAT; Tübingen: Paul Siebeck, 1955) 267.

[6] W. M. Schniedewind, *The Word of God in Transition: From Prophet to Exegete in the Second Temple Period* (JSOTSup 197; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995) 99.

prophet as both verbal and written spokesman for the divine makes the choice of a letter here somewhat less of an oddity. Besides, the letter only serves to highlight the mysteriousness of Elijah's character.

The pericope closes with the expected realization of the warning in vv. 16-19. Elijah's prophecy is fulfilled and the chapter ends with the mention of the king's burial and death.

In summary, there are a couple of interesting things to note about Elijah in the Chronicles text. His function in 2 Chr 21 is most similar to his role in the Naboth story in 1 Kgs 21, which we argued was also a postexilic creation. He is an oracle-giver, a messenger or spokesman for YHWH. But given the Chronicler's theory of retributive justice, Elijah's task is also to warn the king, to confront him with the severity of his crimes and to offer him the opportunity to avert destruction. Jehoram does not react to the letter, nor move to repentance. His punishment, then, is inevitable. It is important that we draw attention once again to the familial context of Jehoram's transgressions, which is brought to the fore by the repeated emphasis on family relations in the language of Elijah's condemnation. The king's betrayal and abandonment of his family and his people involves, by necessity, his rejection of the Lord and the divine commandments as well. Elijah's connections both to repentance and to family harmony will come up again as we examine the Malachi prophecy. For the Chronicler, Elijah remains a prophet of Israel and Judah's historical past.

Elijah in the Book of Malachi

Nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible is it stated or implied that a human figure of Israel's past would return and play a decisive role in Israel's future as well. For the final verses of Malachi do not refer to the coming of an Elijah-*like* figure, but rather to the arrival of Elijah himself. The prophecy about Elijah's return in Mal 3:23-24 must be distinguished from those passages in the Hebrew Bible which predict the return of "David" (cf. Hos 3:5; Jer 30:9; Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24), meaning not the original David but a descendant of David. As J. M. P. Smith has argued, "David did not ascend to heaven and escape death on the one hand; and, on the other, there is no strong tradition of the perpetuation of Elijah's house as is the case with David, whose descendant the Messiah is to be."[7] Naturally, the story in 2 Kgs 2 about Elijah's escape from death through heavenly ascension meant that he alone among the heroes of old was capable of returning to earth again someday. Yet many factors other than simply this belief in the prophet's eternal existence contributed to the creation of an entirely new role for the figure of Elijah.

Since the announcement of Elijah's imminent return to earth serves as the source for all the later traditions about him as an eschatological prophet, it is necessary to be as clear as possible about what sort of figure Elijah represents in the book of Malachi and what are his duties for the end-time. However, this is no simple task for an interpreter of the text (ancient or modern) because the

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[7] J. M. P. Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Malachi* (ICC 27; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), 82-83. For this reason I strongly disagree with the claim recently made by Andrew Hill that the final verses of Malachi represent an appeal to ideal figures from Israel's past and that they should be interpreted typologically; *Malachi* (AB 25D; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 384.

reference made to Elijah in Mal 3:23-24 is intimately linked to a very obscure and complicated passage in Mal 3:1 about the coming of an anonymous messenger who will prepare the way of the Lord. The general thinking of scholars is that a later hand added the passage about Elijah at the end of the book, and this is the position taken here as well.[8] It was the final editor of the text who identified the unnamed messenger in 3:1 as Elijah. This raises the question whether or not the original author of the oracles in the book of Malachi also thought that YHWH's forerunner would be the prophet Elijah. A close reading of the text does not indicate that this was so. But the task of determining the identity of the forerunner-messenger is further complicated by the fact that Mal 3:1 also mentions the arrival of a figure called "the Lord" (האדון) and a figure called "the messenger of the covenant" (מלאך הברית). Just whose arrival is envisaged here and how many figures are expected to come have been the subject of much debate among scholars. Moreover, it has been argued that not all of 3:1 derives from the original author of the oracle. The second half of the verse may represent a later interpolator's understanding of the forerunner's identity, or it may be an elaboration on the acts to be performed by God on the day of his coming. These and many other problems that impinge directly upon a proper understanding of YHWH's forerunner in the end-time and the association of that forerunner with the prophet Elijah will be addressed in this chapter. Before attempting to untangle the knots intrinsic to the text of chapter 3 of Malachi, a brief discussion about the context in which the book was written and its overall structure is in order.

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[8] For further discussion on accepting Mal 3:23-24, along with 3:22, as a later addition to the text, see the section below on these verses.

The Authorship, Date, Structure and Situation of Malachi

According to the superscription in 1:1, the last prophetic scripture in the Book of the Twelve was written by a prophet named "Malachi." However, the Greek version (LXX) does not read a proper name here.[9] It renders the MT ביד מלאכי, "by the hand of my messenger/Malachi," with ἐν χειρὶ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ, "by the hand of his messenger." This leaves the author of the book unknown, just like the anonymous oracles in Zech 9-14 that precede it in the biblical collection (cf. Zech 9:1; 12:1). It is probably the case, then, that the form in the MT was influenced by the reference to "my messenger" (מלאכי) in Mal 3:1.[10]

Nearly all biblical scholars are in agreement that the book of Malachi was written sometime during the Persian period, since the Persian word for "governor" (פחה) occurs in 1:8 and the contents of the book make it clear that the Temple is currently in use (cf. 1:10; 3:1, 10).[11] This would suggest a date of

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[9] Note, too, that the Targum Jonathan understood the word מלאכי as a common noun because the following phrase was added after it: דיתקרי שמיה עזרא ספרא "whose name is Ezra the scribe." However, the Syriac, the Vulgate and the revisions of the LXX by Symmachus and Theodotion do take 'Malachi' as a proper name.

[10] Most scholars recognize some sort of influence or borrowing from Mal 3:1 in the superscription to the book, although opinions vary as to whether it was the redactor who added 1:1 to the text, who mistakenly believed he found the name of the author of these anonymous oracles in 3:1 [see, for example, E. Sellin and G. Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Trans. by D. E. Green; Nashville: Abingdon, 1968) 469; O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (Trans. by P. R. Ackroyd; New York: Harper & Row, 1965) 441; R. C. Dentan, "Malachi," *Interpreter's Bible* (vol. 6; New York: Abingdon, 1956) 1117; G. A. Smith, *The Book of the Twelve Prophets* (The Expositor's Bible, vol. 2; New York: Armstrong & Son, 1905) 345; J. M. P. Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Malachi*, 9, 18], or that the LXX actually attests to the original form of the superscription and that it was changed at some point due to the influence of 3:1; see D. L. Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995) 165-66, 212.

[11] The only scholar to argue against at least a postexilic date for the book of Malachi is Julia O'Brien, who claims that it was written sometime between 605 BCE and the late sixth century; *Priest and Levite in Malachi* (SBLDS 121; Atlanta: Scholars, 1990) 133. O'Brien maintains that the reference to a temple being in use may be to that of the First Temple rather than the Second, and she argues that the reference to a governor could fit the Assyrian period (where the

composition after 515 BCE, when the construction of the Second Temple had been completed. A more precise date around the middle of the fifth century is most often suggested for the text's composition since many of the same issues that are addressed in Malachi also show up in Ezra-Nehemiah, such as mixed marriages and divorce (Mal 2:10-16; cf. Ezra 9:1-15; Neh 13:23-31), corruption of the priesthood (Mal 1:6-2:9; cf. Neh 12:30, 44-47) and neglect of the tithe (Mal 3:8-12; cf. Neh 13:4-22).[12] Scholarly opinions vary considerably over whether the prophet preceded, was contemporary with, or succeeded Ezra and Nehemiah, although it is difficult to determine the chronological sequencing of these three historical persons or their writings with any accuracy strictly on the basis of shared concerns.[13] The most that can be said with any certainty as to the date of Malachi is that it was probably written sometime during the fifth century.[14]

The structure of the book of Malachi has been another factor in dating the text to the postexilic period. Its question-and-answer pattern has been described as a dialogue or disputation, and even likened to that of the Greek diatribe.[15]

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term פחה is sometimes used for military officials) as well as the Persian period. However, see the critique by Hill, *Malachi*, 78; and the review by P. L. Redditt in *CBQ* 54 (1992) 761-62.

[12] J. M. P. Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Malachi*, 7; Dentan, "Malachi," 1117-18; and P. A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987) 157-60.

[13] For example, a pre-Ezran date is often preferred for Malachi because of the latter's apparent ignorance of Ezra's legislation against intermarriage. Yet, some scholars simply claim that Malachi's silence about the legislation meant that Ezra failed to procure permanent results [see Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 158]. And since Malachi makes no distinction between priest and Levite and identifies the priests as sons of Levi rather than Aaron, he is presumed to predate Nehemiah and to have very little, if any, knowledge of the P source. See Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Malachi*, 7-9; and Hill, *Malachi*, 79.

[14] However, Andrew Hill has set a date for Malachi at about 500-475 BCE on the basis of a typological analysis of the text's language; *Malachi*, 80-84.

[15] Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 31-33.

The book may be divided into six rhetorical units, with the superscription in 1:1 and the appendices in 3:22-24 representing editorial additions:

> 1:2-5 affirms God's love for Jacob/Israel and his rejection of Esau through the destruction of Edom;
>
> 1:6-2:9 is addressed to the priests, accusing them of dishonoring God on account of the impure sacrifices they have offered upon his altar and threatening them with a curse if they do not change their ways;
>
> 2:10-16 condemns the men of Judah for breaking faith with God when they divorce their Jewish wives and marry foreign women instead;
>
> 2:17-3:5 responds to those in the community who believe that the law of retribution has failed and proclaims that the Day of the Lord is imminent;
>
> 3:6-12 explains that the agricultural disasters that have plagued the people are due to their failure to bring the full tithe to the temple;
>
> 3:13-21 clearly states that on the day of judgment, the righteous will be saved and the wicked will be destroyed.

Malachi (I will continue to call the prophet by this name for the sake of convenience) confronted both the priests and the laity of his day and responded forcefully to their deep despair and apathy. The bitter frustrations of an impoverished postexilic community have by now reached their zenith. In the minds of many, the end of Babylonian captivity meant that the period of judgment for Israel was also at an end and that salvation and restoration were imminent. One has only to read the prophecies of Second Isaiah to get a sense of the tremendous enthusiasm that the return from exile had generated (cf. Isa 49:8-26). But the glorious age of which Second Isaiah spoke never did come.

Instead, the realities were very different. Drought, famine and heavy taxation created a rather severe socioeconomic crisis in the province of Judah (cf.

Hag 1:6, 10-11; Mal 3:10; Neh 5:15). The prophets Haggai and Zechariah, who were Malachi's immediate predecessors, pinned all their hopes for a decisive turning point on the completion of the rebuilding of the Temple (cf. Hag 2:15-19; Zech 1:16-17). Zechariah even proclaimed that the period of redemption was *already* at hand (cf. 8:9-13)! Yet the people of Malachi's day saw none of the bounty and prosperity that was promised by Second Isaiah, Haggai and Zechariah. It is no wonder that the people started to believe that YHWH does not love them anymore (cf. Mal 1:2), that it is useless to serve him (cf. Mal 3:14) and that he is not a just god (cf. Mal 2:17). This is the background against which the prophecies of Malachi must be understood. It is this kind of cynicism and faithlessness that the prophet protests against when he proclaims in no uncertain terms that YHWH is a god of justice and that his intervention in the world is indeed imminent.

The Disunity of Mal 3:1

Mal 3:1 is part of the fourth oracle or disputation speech which begins at 2:17 and ends at 3:5. The prophet accuses the people of wearying the Lord with their words when they say, "all who do evil are good in the sight of YHWH and in them he delights" or when they ask, "where is the God of judgment?" (2:17). A fundamental principle of ancient Israelite theology is the notion that YHWH is a just judge who loves what is good and rewards those who are righteous, and conversely, hates what is evil and punishes those who are wicked. The people's

statement in 2:17 turns this basic tenet on its head. In casting the reported speech of his audience, Malachi has combined the elements of two formulaic expressions found repeatedly in the book of Deuteronomy: "do evil in the sight of YHWH" [עשׂה (את־) הרע בעיני יהוה; cf. Deut 4:25; 9:18; 17:2; 31:29] and "do good in the sight of YHWH" [עשׂה הטוב (והישׁר) בעיני יהוה; cf. Deut 6:18; 12:25, 28; 13:19].[16] In terms of the Deuteronomic covenant, "doing what is good" means obeying all of God's commandments, while "doing what is evil" translates as covenant transgression. Thus one reads in Deuteronomy that whoever does evil is considered to be "the abomination of YHWH" (תועבת יהוה; cf. Deut 18:12; 25:16). But in Mal 2:17, the people think that the evildoer is looked upon by YHWH as טוב rather than תועבה.[17] As Beth Glazier-McDonald has commented, the people "consider the upheaval in their lives to be the result of a reversal in the divine sphere. Yahweh, who had previously reacted favorably to the good, now has cast his lot with the wicked."[18] The people even count the evildoers as blessed (מאשׁרים) because they have tested God and have escaped his wrath (cf. Mal 3:15).

The people's question, איה אלהי המשׁפט, is most often rendered by translators as "where is the God of justice?"[19] However, the substantive משׁפט

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[16] Hill, *Malachi*, 263; Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 208; B. Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger* (SBLDS 98; Atlanta: Scholars, 1987) 127.

[17] Petersen points out how assonance enhances this transformation from "abomination" (תועבה) to "good" (טוב); *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 208.

[18] Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, 127.

[19] E.g., Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, 122; Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 206; Dentan, "Malachi," 1136; R. Mason, *The Books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) 151; and Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 282. See also the English versions NEB, NIV, NRSV and JPS.

yields a variety of meanings such as "justice," "judgment," "custom," "norm," "statute," "vindication" and "deliverance."[20] So what is it exactly that the people are questioning or doubting with respect to their God? It is surely not the case that Malachi's audience has turned into atheists expressing their doubts about YHWH's existence, as some commentators have claimed.[21] But are the people merely disputing the character of God as just or fair? Andrew Hill has recently argued that the issue is more than just a question of God's character:

> Malachi's audience is calling for a just God to 'do justice,' to fulfill his role as divine Judge and enact retributive judgment against evildoers . . . The definite article is attached to *mišpāṭ* ('judgment'), suggesting that Malachi has in mind 'the judgment' of the eschaton – the Day of Yahweh.[22]

The expectation that God will dispense justice at the day of his coming is an integral part of the covenant relationship between him and his people, and of Israel's eschatology.[23] Malachi's audience has apparently come to doubt the ability and/or the desire of God to manifest himself and to put the blessings and curses of the covenant into effect.

The people's lack of faith in the coming day of YHWH and in his ability or willingness to fulfill his role as judge provokes a quick and emphatic response from the deity himself:

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[20] Temba L. J. Mafico, "Just, Justice," *ABD* 3:1127; and *idem*, "Judge, Judging," *ABD* 3:1106.

[21] J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets* (Vol. 15; trans. by J. Owen; 1848 reprint; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979) 566; and J. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries; London: Tyndale, 1972) 242.

[22] Hill, *Malachi*, 264.

[23] Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 287.

3:1a הִנְנִי שֹׁלֵחַ מַלְאָכִי וּפִנָּה־דֶרֶךְ לְפָנָי
3:1b וּפִתְאֹם יָבוֹא אֶל־הֵיכָלוֹ הָאָדוֹן אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם מְבַקְשִׁים
3:1c וּמַלְאַךְ הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם חֲפֵצִים הִנֵּה־בָא
אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת׃

3:1a 'Behold I am sending my messenger and he will clear a way before me.
3:1b And suddenly the Lord whom you are seeking will come into his temple;
3:1c and the messenger of the covenant whom you desire, behold he is coming,'
says the Lord of Hosts.

This verse is a *crux interpretum* because it is not altogether clear who is meant by "my messenger," "the lord" and "the messenger of the covenant." It is the identity of the 'messenger' and the 'messenger of the covenant,' however, that is most problematic. The association of 'the Lord' (האדון) with YHWH seems incontrovertible, since it can hardly be said of anyone else that the Temple belonged to him.[24] The people have also just been inquiring about God's whereabouts in 2:17, so it only makes sense that he is 'the Lord' whom they are seeking. But this association of 'the Lord' with the deity raises a further difficulty because it means that YHWH has all of a sudden begun to refer to himself in the third person partway through his pronouncement. This indeed strikes the reader as quite odd. In fact, everything from 3:1b-4 is in the third person, while only 3:1a and 3:5 remain in the first person. The grammatical shift from first person to third person speech has led a number of scholars to claim that 3:1b-4 must be an addition to the original prophecy contained in 2:17, 3:1a

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[24] See Bruce V. Malchow, "The Messenger of the Covenant in Mal 3:1," *JBL* 103 (1984) 253.

and 3:5.[25] This interpretation of the text is the most plausible one because it not only accounts for the disjunction caused by the shifting persons of speech – a peculiarity which by itself would not be enough to support the claim that these verses are secondary – but also explains why the subject matter of 3:1b-4 has absolutely nothing to do with the concerns expressed by the people in 2:17. The concerns of the interpolator who inserted 3:1b-4 into the text are of a priestly and cultic nature, and although the prophet Malachi is indeed preoccupied with priestly matters (cf. 1:6-2:9), he is not the one responsible for penning these verses. The secondary nature of 3:1b-4 will become clear when we discuss this passage in greater detail below. But first, let us return to an examination of the original prophecy.

Mal 3:1a: The Identity and Function of "My Messenger"

The idea that there will be some sort of herald or messenger preceding the Lord's arrival on his day is an innovation with Malachi. The identity of the Lord's messenger is not specified in Mal 3:1a, but the wording of this verse echoes that of two other passages in the Hebrew scriptures, Exod 23:20 and Isa 40:3, and is suggestive of the sort of figure that the prophet had in mind. First of all, the

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[25] Those who regard all of 3:1b-4 as secondary include: Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 207; Malchow, "The Messenger of the Covenant in Mal 3:1," 253; Mason, *The Books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 152; A. S. van der Woude, "Der Engel des Bundes," in J. Jeremias and L. Perlitt, eds., *Die Botschaft und die Boten* (*Fs.* H. W. Wolff; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981) 290-91; and P. L. Redditt, "The Book of Malachi in Its Social Setting," *CBQ* 56 (1994) 241, 249.

form of Mal 3:1a is nearly identical to that of Exod 23:20, which is part of an epilogue that concludes the Book of the Covenant:

הנני שלח מלאכי ... דרך לפני		Mal 3:1a
הנה אנכי שלח מלאכי[26] לפניך ... בדרך		Exod 23:20

YHWH is the speaker in both of these passages that mention the sending of a messenger. The word מלאך in Hebrew simply means "one who is sent with a commission" and it is used in the biblical texts to refer to both human and heavenly beings charged with some special task.[27] The context of Exod 23:20 and several parallel passages make it likely that the term here signifies a heavenly messenger or angel.[28] The task of this messenger is to protect the Israelites during their journey from Egypt to Canaan and to help bring them into the promised land. The people are commanded to obey the messenger and not defy him, "since My Name is in him," and to do all that God says (Exod 23:21). The reward for obedience will be YHWH's annihilation of all Israel's enemies when they reach the land of Canaan (Exod 23:22-23). As David Petersen has remarked with respect to this passage, "[t]he coming help of Yahweh by means of the

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[26] The MT of Exod 23:20 has the form מלאך instead of מלאכי. The LXX, Vulgate and Samaritan Pentateuch all read "my messenger" with a first person suffix on the noun. This makes for a much smoother reading and also one that is in agreement with Exod 23:23. See D. L. Petersen, *Late Israelite Prophecy: Studies in Deutero-Prophetic Literature and in Chronicles* (SBLMS 23; Missoula: Scholars, 1977) 43.

[27] See G. von Rad, "ἄγγελος," *TDNT* 1:76-77; and S. A. Meier, "Angel I," *DDD* , 45-46.

[28] The parallel passages include Exod 32:34 and 33:2; cf. also 14:19.

messenger thus depends upon Israel's obedience to the laws of the Book of the Covenant."[29]

In Exod 32:34, a passage which parallels Exod 23:20, YHWH reiterates his promise of the possession of the land and of his messenger leading the way. On the heels of this renewed promise, however, comes a threat of judgment for the wicked. After Israel's apostasy with the golden calf, Moses takes on the role of intercessor and attempts to win forgiveness from God for the people who committed this "great sin" (cf. 32:30-32). YHWH rejects Moses' plea for a full forgiveness and instead proclaims that there will be a day of judgment at some point in the future for the evildoers:

ועתה לך נחה את־העם אל אשר־דברתי לך
הנה מלאכי ילך לפניך
וביום פקדי ופקדתי עליהם חטאתם

'Go now, lead the people where I told you.
Behold, my messenger shall go before you.
But on the day of my visitation, I will requite
them for their sin' (Exod 32:34).

YHWH is indeed a just god, for the guilty will not go unpunished for their crime. But their punishment may not be instantaneous. Here the deity has decided to defer judgment until the time of his own choosing.

Two verses later a rather different view of YHWH's accompanying divine messenger is expressed: "I will send a messenger ('my messenger' LXX) before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites . . . But I will not go in your midst, since you are a stiffnecked people, lest I consume you on

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[29] Petersen, *Late Israelite Prophecy*, 43.

the way" (Exod 33:2-3). In this passage, the very act of sending the messenger is a sign of judgment from God, for it indicates that the deity himself will no longer guide Israel on its way.[30] The messenger has become a substitute for the divine presence. In short, God sends an angel in his stead to serve as a mediator so that the people, who are inclined to evil (i.e., are 'stiffnecked'), will be kept safe from God's own all-consuming, destructive physical presence.

The wording of Mal 3:1a and Exod 23:20 is too similar to be a mere coincidence. The prophet Malachi has God announcing the sending of a מלאך before he draws near for judgment (cf. Mal 3:5). Given the prophet's intentional allusion to the Exodus passage, one would naturally assume that he had a heavenly messenger or angel in mind as the precursor to the Lord's arrival. It is not difficult to see why the prophet might associate an angel with the coming eschatological day of the Lord, since YHWH's angel was already connected in some fashion with the notion of God's judgment (albeit, not the final judgment) in the two passages that are parallel to Exod 23:20. In Exod 32:34, the angel is linked by physical proximity within the verse to "the day of my [YHWH's] visitation." In Exod 33:2, the sending of the angel is itself a sign of judgment from God. This is not to say that the messenger of Mal 3:1a is sent by God as an agent for punishment, for it is clear in Malachi's original oracle that the role of judge is to be played by God alone.

The prophet's allusion to Exod 23:20, where the angel is so closely identified with the deity itself, raises the question whether Malachi might have had in mind an alter-ego or surrogate of some kind for YHWH in 3:1a. This line

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[30] B. S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster, 1974) 587.

of reasoning has been taken by Bernard Duhm, and more recently by Andrew Hill.[31] It is true that in certain biblical passages there is a confusing alternation between YHWH and the מלאך יהוה (e.g., Gen 16:7-13; 21:15-21; 22:11-12; 31:11-13; Exod 3:2-6; Judg 6:11-24) which makes it seem as if the two figures are actually one and the same. Hill maintains that "it may be possible to explain the relationship of 'the Angel of Yahweh' to Yahweh himself hypostatized in humanoid form."[32] But this is a dubious argument to make with respect to Exod 23:20 and Mal 3:1a, where the phrase "the Angel of Yahweh" (מלאך יהוה) does not even occur. Moreover, in Israel as in the ancient Near East in general, the underlying conception of the heavenly world was that of a royal court. YHWH was envisioned as a king, and at his service was an entire entourage of divine beings. It simply does not make sense to interpret the messenger in either Exod 23:20 or Mal 3:1a as manifestations of God rather than as heavenly beings distinct from the deity.

Although the identification of "my messenger" with a supernatural being would seem to be a foregone conclusion, given the prophet's intentional allusion to Exod 23:20, the text of Mal 3:1a is somewhat ambiguous and may be interpreted in another way. It has already been mentioned that the term מלאך can refer to either a human or a divine being commissioned with a specific task. Prophets were commonly understood as divinely commissioned to proclaim the will of the deity; that is, to serve as YHWH's messengers. In postexilic literature prophets were sometimes referred to as מלאכים. For example, the prophet

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[31] B. Duhm, "Anmerkungen zu den Zwölf Propheten," *ZAW* 31 (1911) 182; Hill, *Malachi*, 288.

[32] Hill, *Malachi*, 288.

Haggai is called a מלאך יהוה in Hag 1:13. Second Isaiah defines the activity of the "servant" with the title מלאך in 42:19 and 44:26. In the Chronicler's history we read:

> The Lord God of their fathers had sent word to them through his messengers daily without fail, for he had pity on his people and on his dwelling-place. But they mocked the messengers of God and disdained his words and taunted his prophets until the wrath of the Lord against his people grew beyond remedy (2 Chr 36:15-16).

It is possible, then, that Malachi had in mind a prophet as the forerunner to the day when YHWH comes in judgment.

The allusion to Exod 23:20 does not rule out the association of "my messenger" with a prophet because there seems to have been an earlier prophetic tradition that understood the מלאך who guarded Israel during the exodus from Egypt as a prophet and not as an angel. This tradition may be found in Hos 12:14: וּבְנָבִיא הֶעֱלָה יְהוָה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם וּבְנָבִיא נִשְׁמָר ("With a prophet, YHWH brought Israel up from Egypt; with a prophet they were guarded"). There are only two other passages in the Hebrew scriptures that mention the Israelites being guarded or protected (שמר) on their way from the land of Egypt. One of them is Josh 24:17, which states that it was YHWH who guarded Israel, and the other is Exod 23:20, which has a מלאך guarding the people. The statement in Hos 12:14 appears to be an interpretation of the tradition in Exod 23:20. The prophet who is being referred to in the Hosea passage can be none other than Moses – the 'messenger' who guarded Israel and whom Israel was commanded to obey. By alluding to the Exodus passage, Malachi surely could not have intended to mean that Moses himself would be YHWH's messenger in the end-time, since he had died long ago. But Malachi

could be hinting at God's sending of some other prophet (perhaps "Malachi" himself as some commentators have suggested).[33]

The task of the messenger in Mal 3:1a is not to protect the people on a journey, as in Exod 23:20, but to clear a way before God. The expression "clear a way" (פנה דרך) comes from Isa 40:3:

קול קורא במדבר פנו דרך יהוה
ישרו בערבה מסלה לאלהינו

A voice cries out: 'In the desert clear the way of the Lord!
Make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God!'

The speaker of this passage in Second Isaiah is a member of the divine council who commands others, perhaps the rest of the assembly, to clear a road through the desert for YHWH – that is, to make the road smooth or to free it from all obstacles. According to the surrounding context of this passage and to the overall message of Second Isaiah, it is apparent that this is a road leading straight from Babylon to Jerusalem. The preparation of this road is to be done on a cosmic scale, for every valley is to be raised, every hill and mountain made low, uneven ground is to become level and the ridges are to become a plain (40:4).[34] Then, as the anonymous herald proclaims, "the presence of the Lord shall appear and all flesh, as one, shall behold" (40:5).

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[33] Petersen, *Late Israelite Prophecy*, 42-43; Mason, *The Books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 152; K. Elliger, *Das Buch der zwölf Kleinen Propheten* (ATD 25; 4th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959) 2.206.

[34] It is apparent that the preparation of a road for YHWH is to be performed by supernatural beings, as Frank M. Cross has argued, since the leveling of hills and raising of valleys are not projects that could be undertaken by mere mortals; *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 188.

In many ancient Near Eastern texts, the imagery of building an open road or fashioning a straight highway is employed metaphorically to signify an era of peace.[35] Thus, Second Isaiah begins his prophecy by declaring that Israel and Judah are now entering an era of peace and restoration. It is also the case that the prophet is alluding to the idea of the "processional road" in Isa 40:3-5, which is to be prepared and made level for the entry of the god/king into the temple. Processions were common ritual practices throughout the ancient world, particularly epiphany processions, and they usually occurred in the context of a religious festival. Sigmund Mowinckel has claimed that Second Isaiah is borrowing the language of the processional way from the festival of the manifestation of YHWH, or the festival of his enthronement, which took place during the autumn season in Jerusalem.[36] According to Mowinckel, this festal day was originally called "the day of the Lord" or "the day of YHWH," and it was the day when he was to appear, become enthroned as king, and secure justice and salvation for his people.

The allusion to Exod 23:20 suggests that YHWH's messenger in Mal 3:1a may be understood as an angelic figure. That interpretation receives further support from Malachi's allusion to Isa 40:3 – a passage in which the speaker is a

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[35] Sometimes it is the king who boasts of his power to secure peace for his nation, which is often stated in terms of his construction of open, level, or straight roads (i.e., safe roads) on which the inhabitants can travel undisturbed and unharmed (e.g., the Moabite Stone, *ANET* 320; Nebuchadnezzar II, *ANET*, 307). At other times, an era of peace exemplified by open, level, or straight roads is ascribed to a particular deity (e.g., to Nergal, *ANET*, 268; to Osiris, *AEL* 2:85; to Aten, *AEL* 2:97; and to YHWH, Ps 143:10; Prov 3:6; 15:19; Jer 31:9); see B. J. Beitzel, "Travel and Communication (OT World)," *ABD* 6:647.

[36] S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 139-45. However, Claus Westermann understands the language of Second Isaiah's proclamation to be influenced specifically by the great processional ways of Babylonian festivals and festal hymns; *Isaiah 40-66* (OTL; trans by D. M. G. Stalker; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969) 38-39.

heavenly messenger or herald who commands other (heavenly) beings to clear a path for the Lord. Malachi borrows the motif of the "processional way" from Second Isaiah to indicate to his audience that YHWH will soon be manifest, but at the same time he reverses its accepted meaning. Unlike Second Isaiah, Malachi does not employ the processional motif to suggest that a new exodus is about to take place or that the day of God's coming is a festal occasion when he will bring salvation to his people. Much like the prophet Amos before him, Malachi rejects the notion that the day of YHWH is a day of salvation.[37] Rather, the day of God's coming will be a day of judgment as we read in Mal 3:5: "I will draw near to you for judgment." This is precisely what the people doubted in 2:17 – the desire or ability of God to come and to fulfill his role as Judge. The prophet's response in 3:1a – cast within the first-person speech of God himself – makes it abundantly clear that the deity will indeed appear to his people. For a divine herald is being sent by God to clear a path in front of him for his arrival and, presumably, to announce his coming. It should be noted, too, that it was customary in the ancient Near East for both the road to be cleared of obstacles for the safe and easy passage of a king or other important dignitary and for messengers or heralds to be sent in advance of distinguished travelers in order to inform their future hosts of their soon arrival.[38]

It is not necessarily the case, however, that Malachi's allusion to Isa 40:3 ensures the identification of "my messenger" in 3:1a with a heavenly being. Ambiguity comes into play over the phrase "clearing a way" because the word

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[37] Cf. Amos 5:18-20.

[38] S. A. Meier, "Angel I," *DDD*, 47.

for 'way' (דרך) in Hebrew can be used both literally and figuratively. It is apparent in Isa 40:3 that a literal road, way or path is meant by the word דרך. Yet Third Isaiah picks up the motif of "the way" from his predecessor and reinterprets it in a figurative sense. In Isa 57:14 we read: "Build up, build up a highway! Clear a way (פנו דרך)! Remove the stumbling-block from the way of my people!" For Third Isaiah, the "stumbling-block" that has been preventing the restoration and salvation of Israel is the people's sinful conduct. Only with the contrite and lowly of spirit will YHWH dwell and only their spirits and hearts will he revive (Isa 57:15). Second Isaiah's call for a new exodus from Babylon has now become a metaphor for "the way" of the wisdom literature, on which the righteous consciously place themselves.

By "clearing a way" before YHWH comes in judgment, Malachi might have meant the removal of obstacles from the people's thoughts and behavior that would prevent them from experiencing the salvation of God instead of his wrathful judgment. In this view, the task of the messenger might involve something like preaching "repentance" – that is, persuading the people to change their current attitudes and actions toward God. Malachi's audience is, in fact, so messed up in their thinking about the deity that they actually believe that he takes delight in those who do evil (2:17)! God may be sending his prophet (i.e., "my messenger") to warn the people and to give them one last chance to change their ways before the final judgment takes place.[39] Concerning those who do not

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[39] Petersen maintains that there was a general expectation in the postexilic period that a prophet would appear before YHWH came to stand in judgment because Israel had already seen the prophets appear prior to judgment by YHWH before the defeat of 587 BCE; *Late Israelite Prophecy*, 44.

listen to God's messenger and take this opportunity to repent, the Lord will draw near to them for judgment and will act as a swift witness against them (cf. 3:5).

Interpreting "my messenger" in 3:1a as a prophet rather than as an angel also receives support from the allusion to Isa 40:3. The prophet in ancient Israel was thought of as deriving his authority from his being divinely commissioned to proclaim the will of the deity. Isa 40:1-11 relates a scene taking place in the divine assembly which the prophet, who is being commissioned in verses 6-8, is to be understood as overhearing. This creates a very interesting parallel to Mal 3:1a if one is to consider the idea that Malachi could have been referring to himself as YHWH's messenger. In other words, Mal 3:1a can be read as a very brief commission-scene. Malachi is reporting his own commissioning by the deity that he relates verbatim in the first-person speech of the divine (which he overheard in the divine assembly?). Perhaps Malachi saw himself as the messenger whose words were to clear a way for YHWH's coming. Such a reading would certainly highlight the imminence of the Lord's arrival, for which the people were growing very impatient.

The deity's response to the people's wearying words in 2:17 continues in 3:5:

> 'I will draw near to you for judgment (לְמִשְׁפָּט), and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, the adulterers, those who swear falsely, those who oppress the laborer, widow, and orphan, and those who thrust aside the resident alien – that is, those who do not fear me,' says the Lord of Hosts.

With this statement, YHWH answers both utterances expressed by the people. The god of justice/judgment about whom they asked will soon appear. And YHWH does not take delight in evildoers; he judges them. The use of the word

'judgment' (משפט) in 2:17 and 3:5 frames the oracle and emphasizes the punitive nature of the day of YHWH. Just as the wording of 2:17 echoed covenantal language, so too does the wording of 3:5 – a kind of laundry list of covenant violations. Deuteronomic law expressly forbids the practice of sorcery (Deut 18:10). The biblical injunction against adultery is found in the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:14; Deut 5:17) and is an offense that carries the weight of the death penalty (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22). Lying under oath or swearing falsely by the name of God is also prohibited (Exod 20:7, 16; Lev 5:24; 19:12). Mosaic Law bans the withholding of wages from laborers (Lev 19:13; Deut 24:14) and guarantees protection of the widow and orphan from mistreatment (Deut 10:18; 24:17; 27:19). Even the final charge, "those who do not fear me," is characteristic of Deuteronomic rhetoric.[40]

In summary, the wording of Mal 3:1a is sufficiently ambiguous to allow for two possible interpretations as to the identity and function of God's messenger. On account of the allusions to Exod 23:20 and Isa 40:3 the messenger may be understood as either a heavenly being or a prophet. If one assumes that a heavenly figure was meant as the precursor to the Day of the Lord, then it would appear that Malachi was joining together quotations from two disparate scriptural passages which, in their plain sense, deal with angels. If, on the other hand, one assumes that a prophet was meant as the precursor to the Day of the Lord, then it would appear that Malachi was being more exegetically creative with the two texts that he combines. Such a technique would not be out of the question where Malachi is concerned, for the exegetical reworking or

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[40] M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972) 332, 335.

reapplication of earlier texts and traditions is found elsewhere in the book.[41] A close reading of Malachi's oracle reveals that the prophet Elijah did not at all figure into the eschatological scenario envisioned by him. But the ambiguity surrounding the verse about God's messenger makes that passage fertile ground for later reinterpretation.

Mal 3:1b-4: The Identity and Function of the "Messenger of the Covenant"

We have already had occasion to discuss the likelihood that 3:1b-4 is a later addition to Malachi's original oracle. The fact that the deity awkwardly refers to himself in the third person in these verses, and because their subject matter does not cohere with that of the rest of the unit, points us in that direction. The concern in verses 1b-4 is for the cult and the priesthood, and not for the welfare of the community at-large. The language is not that of judgment, but of purification and cleansing. Verses 1b-4 speak specifically of the temple and of Judah and Jerusalem, and there is nothing which evokes the language of the Deuteronomic covenant.

The strong disjunction between the original prophecy and these additional verses is also evidenced grammatically by the use of the word פתאם ("suddenly, unexpectedly") in emphatic position at the beginning of 3:1b. Those scholars

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[41] See Michael Fishbane's explanation of how Mal 1:6-2:9 is an exegetical reworking of the Priestly Blessing from Num 6:23-27; *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985) 332-34.

who wish to read all of 2:17-3:5 as a unity argue that the disjunctive word order in 3:1b simply serves to separate the action of the forerunner-messenger in 3:1a from that of YHWH in the rest of the passage.[42] Yet it is difficult to accept 3:1b as a direct continuation of 3:1a because 3:1a speaks of a forerunner who will prepare for YHWH's arrival, while 3:1b mentions YHWH coming suddenly and unexpectedly without there being any preparation. Plus the arrival of YHWH clearly occurs in 3:5, which would make the unexpected arrival of the deity in 3:1b utterly perplexing. Despite occasional claims to the contrary, the term האדון in 3:1b must be taken in reference to YHWH; for wherever the word appears in the Hebrew Bible with the definite article, it is always in reference to the deity.[43] The suffixed pronoun "his" on the word היכל ("temple") further reinforces the identification of 'the Lord' with YHWH, since only YHWH can be thought of as the owner of the temple. The act of YHWH coming to his temple in Jerusalem is surely there in the background of Malachi's prophecy, because he employs the motif of the processional way in order to assure his audience of the certainty of the deity's arrival. The interpolator, however, has brought this act to the foreground and has even made it overshadow YHWH's judicial role due to the attention that the use of the word פתאם in emphatic position commands and to the ominous quality that it possesses.[44]

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[42] E.g., Hill, *Malachi*, 267; and Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, 139.

[43] Cf. Exod 23:17; 34:23; Isa 1:24; 3:1; 10:16, 33; 19:4. A. S. van der Woude argues that the term האדון (along with the terms מלאכי and מלאך הברית) refers not to YHWH, but to the highest divine messenger of YHWH – that is, the archangel Michael; "Der Engel des Bundes," 294-95.

[44] The word פתאם is most often used in the Hebrew Bible in conjunction with the suddenness of some calamity, invasion, disaster or terror; consult BDB, 837.

The greatest difficulty facing the interpreter of this oracle is determining the identity and function of the מלאך הברית ("the messenger of the covenant"), for the title is found nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible. The confusion is compounded by the disunity of the oracle and by the fact that the arrival of two other figures has already been mentioned. Commentators are divided over whether this "messenger of the covenant" is the same messenger mentioned in 3:1a, a separate messenger, or equivalent to YHWH himself. The parallelism of the lines (האדון אשר־אתם מבקשים//מלאך הברית אשר־אתם חפצים) tends to lead the majority of scholars to equate the messenger of the covenant with YHWH.[45] In this view, "the messenger/angel of the covenant" is considered to be equivalent to "the angel of the Lord" (מלאך יהוה), a figure that is both identified with and distinguished from God elsewhere in the Hebrew scriptures. It has been suggested that the 'messenger of the covenant' is the same as the 'messenger 'in 3:1a, and hence, is the guardian angel of Israel.[46] One can safely assume that an ancient interpreter of Malachi's oracle would have recognized the allusion to Exod 23:20. This could explain the interpolator's use of the unusual expression מלאך הברית since the announcement in Exod 23:20, that God will send a messenger to guide and to guard his people, comes on the heels of the Covenant Code. The symmetry created by the phrase הנה־בא in reference to the messenger of the covenant at the end of 3:1 and the word הנני in reference to the

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[45] W. Rudolph, *Haggai – Sacharja 1-8 – Sacharja 9-14 – Maleachi* (KAT 13,4; Gütersloh: Mohn, 1976) 278-79; Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, 132; Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 289; Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 211; J. M. P. Smith, *Malachi*, 63; Hill, *Malachi*, 289.

[46] K. Elliger, *Das Buch der zwölf Kleinen Propheten*, 208; J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1962) 405. See also the JPS translation.

messenger at the beginning of 3:1 does hint at an association between these two figures. However, it is also stated that the people "desire" (חפץ) this messenger of the covenant.[47] Given the context of the oracle into which the interpolator has inserted this passage, it would appear that the מלאך הברית must be identified with the deity and not with the messenger of 3:1a, because it is clearly the presence of YHWH that the people are desiring. There is no indication that Malachi's audience was anxiously awaiting the coming of anyone other than YHWH himself. If the messenger of the covenant is to be understood as some figure other than YHWH, then the use of the expression "whom you desire" in relation to this figure becomes exceedingly troublesome.

Bruce V. Malchow has argued that the messenger of the covenant whom the people desire is neither YHWH nor the guardian angel of Israel, but is to be understood as a priestly messiah – an eschatological, definitive priest who would reform the cult in a final and permanent way.[48] The term "messiah" (משיח) is not used in Malachi, but the basis for such a figure can be found in the various biblical texts which refer to priestly covenants (cf. Mal 2:4-7; Num 25:11-13; Neh 13:29; Jer 33:18). Malchow points out that the terms מלאך and ברית are used in close association with each other in only one other passage in the book and that is in Mal 2:4-7. Here the prophet idealizes Levi and speaks about the covenant of priesthood that God made with the patriarch, which the priests of Malachi's day

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[47] Because of the parallelism of the lines in 3:1b-c, it makes the most sense to take the מלאך as the subject of the relative clause אשר־אתם חפצים, rather than the ברית, even though both are grammatically possible.

[48] Malchow, "The Messenger of the Covenant in Mal 3:1," 253-54. W. Bousset [*Die Religion des Judentums im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter* (2d ed.; Berlin: Reuther und Reichard, 1906), 266] and R. Mason [*The Books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 153] have also suggested that the messenger of the covenant might be a priestly figure.

have so thoroughly corrupted (cf. 2:8). Malachi's praise for Levi ends in 2:7 with his calling the priest (כהן) a "messenger of the Lord of Hosts" (מלאך יהוה צבאות).[49] Malchow surmises that the interpolator who added 3:1b-4 to the text may well have been influenced by the book to continue Malachi's line of thought. Indeed, the priestly interpolator may have felt the need to incorporate a plan for the priesthood into Malachi's eschatological scenario. Especially so if one considers the fact that the prophet's diatribe against the priests of his day is so caustic and seems to leave so little room for the possibility of the postexilic priesthood to redeem itself from God's impending curses.[50]

The association of the messenger of the covenant with a priestly figure does make the most sense if one considers the eschatological duty of purifying the Levites that is described in Mal 3:3-4 to belong to this messenger. Yet, there is still a problem with the people's "desiring" the presence of the messenger of the covenant. Malchow points out that the Israelites awaited the coming of a priestly messiah from Levi but that this expectation can only be found in much later writings from the Second Temple period (e.g., *Jub* 31:13-17; *TReub* 6:7-12; *TLevi* 2:11; 18; *TDan* 5:10-13; *TNaph* 8:2-3; *TGad* 8:1; *TJos* 19:11; CD 8:1-21; 1QS 9:9-11; 4QTestim 14-20). Consequently, Malchow argues that the interpolator of Mal 3:1b-4 added his information to the book of Malachi at a very late date – that is, sometime shortly after 165 BCE.[51] But it is impossible to know precisely when

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[49] I am in basic agreement with Julia O'Brien who has convincingly demonstrated that Malachi did not distinguish between Levites and Aaronites, but used the term כהן in a general way for "priests;" *Priest and Levite in Malachi*, 27-48.

[50] As Michael Fishbane has stated in regards to Mal 1:6-2:9, "[a] more violent condemnation of the priests can hardly be imagined;" *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 333.

[51] Malchow suggests that the interpolation was made not long after the book of Daniel was written. He points to Dan 9:26, where the high priest Onias III is called "a messiah," and to

3:1b-4 was added to the text, since no allusion is made in these verses to any particular historical event or person. If the messenger of the covenant is a priestly messiah, then this would be our earliest reference to such a figure and the only one of its kind in the Hebrew Bible. The rest of the passage needs to be examined before one can determine which identification of the messenger of the covenant is the most plausible.

The main question concerning the rest of the passage is just who is being referred to in verses 2-3? The personal pronouns most naturally refer to God, although the nearest antecedent is the messenger of the covenant. The rhetorical questions in 3:2, "who will endure the day of his coming and who will remain standing when he appears," sound as if YHWH is the intended subject. To speak of 'the day of his coming' or the day of his appearance is surely to speak of the day of YHWH's epiphany. The prophet Amos exclaimed that the day of YHWH would be a day of darkness and not light (cf. 5:18, 20). Zephaniah described it as "a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of calamity and desolation" (1:15). In Joel 2:11, we read: "For great is the day of YHWH and very terrible, and who can endure it?"[52] The figure in Mal 3:2 is also said to be like a "smelter's fire" (אֵשׁ מְצָרֵף) and like "fullers' lye" (בֹּרִית מְכַבְּסִים). Fire is typically a symbol of theophany and is often associated with the idea of divine judgment. The root צָרַף means " to smelt, refine, test" and is sometimes used of

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Dan 11:22, where Onias is referred to as "the prince of the covenant" (נְגִיד בְּרִית). He also hypothesizes that the Israelites began to look for a future priest at this time because of the disruptions in the high priesthood that began under Antiochus Ephiphanes; "The Messenger of the Covenant in Mal 3:1," 255.

[52] As Glazier-McDonald notes, the same verb (כּוּל, "to endure") is found in both Joel 2:11 and Mal 3:2; *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, 143.

God refining his people Israel by "smelting out" the dross of their wickedness in Isa 1:25 and Jer 6:29 and 9:6. In Zech 13:9, God will put the surviving remnant of his people into the fire and "I will smelt them as one smelts silver." Afterwards, this purified remnant will invoke YHWH by name and declare, "The Lord is my God!" The notion of cleansing, selecting, and purifying continues in the Malachi passage with the comparison to the lye of fullers. The verbal root כבס means "to wash by treading, kneading or beating" and the word may refer to either the washing of garments or of persons. It is never used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible to describe God or his activities, but the word is especially common in the Priestly source (i.e., the book of Leviticus).

Verse 3 goes on to specify who will undergo this treatment of refining and purifying. It will be "the sons of Levi" (בני־לוי) or the Levitical priesthood.[53] It is clear that the same figure who is being spoken about in 3:2 is also the one who is responsible in 3:3 for cleansing the priesthood, for the verse begins by stating that "he will sit/remain (וישב) a refiner (מצרף) and purifier (מטהר) of silver." The verb טהר "to be pure, cleanse, purify" is most often used in the Hebrew Bible to refer to ritual or cultic purity and so it is appropriately employed here to indicate the cleansing of the Levites. The end-result of this process is that the Levites "will become for YHWH presenters of an offering in righteousness (בצדקה)." In his oracle against the priesthood in 1:6-2:9, Malachi accuses the

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[53] The fact that the phrase "sons of Levi" is used in 3:3 to signify a wicked or impure priesthood in need of cleansing may be taken as another indication of the secondary nature of this passage. For elsewhere in the book of Malachi, the prophet only uses the name "Levi" in a positive or favorable manner (cf. 2:4, 8). Even though Malachi did not draw a distinction between priests (כהנים) and Levites, he seems to have held a great reverence for Levi and, for that reason, would probably not have referred to the current wicked priesthood by the phrase "sons of Levi."

cultic functionaries of his day of dishonoring and degrading God on account of their impure sacrifices and their improper attitude and behavior with respect to their duties. Apparently, the situation had not changed much by the time the interpolator added this passage to the text. In fact, the state of the priesthood and the condition of the sacrifices are considered to be so heinous as to require some sort of divine intervention in the end-time in order to rectify the problem. Only after the Levites as a group have been purified "like gold and like silver" will the offering of Judah and Jerusalem once again be pleasing to God "as in days of old and as in former years" (3:4). It is difficult to know precisely what period of Israel's history is being idealized in 3:4 as far as sacrifices are concerned. According to the pre-exilic prophets, there hasn't been any time since the Conquest that Israel or her sacrifices have been pleasing to YHWH; and both Amos (5:25) and Jeremiah (7:22) seem to indicate their belief that there were no sacrifices earlier in the wilderness period. Yet, it is clear that the task of the figure who is to purify the Levites is to bring things back to their original and intended state.

Some tentative conclusions may be drawn at this point regarding the identity and function of the messenger of the covenant. It is a common belief in postexilic prophecy that YHWH's presence would once again grace the Jerusalem Temple. Then, a period of peace and restoration would ensue or a new age would dawn. As we have already witnessed, this notion of the deity returning to his temple is implicit in Mal 3:1a. But the interpolator who added 3:1b-4 to the text, whose main concern was obviously for the temple cult and its purity, makes that notion explicit and also interprets and expands upon Malachi's cryptic prophecy about a coming messenger. Naturally, YHWH could

not be thought to dwell in a polluted temple – one that had been defiled by a corrupt priesthood. Therefore, it is only proper to think of the cult and its officiants as undergoing a process of purification before the deity can become manifest and dwell among his people. With this in mind, "clearing a way" before YHWH could very well be interpreted as involving the removal of those cultic 'stumbling-blocks' that would bar the deity from being able to enter the place of his abode.

That the interpolator was influenced by what was written in 2:17-3:1a is rather apparent. The continuation of thought and the shared vocabulary indicate as much. For this reason, it seems best to reject the arguments that the messenger of the covenant is equivalent to YHWH or that he is a separate messenger who is not to be identified with the messenger from 3:1a. The symmetry between הִנְנִי at the beginning of the verse and הִנֵּה־בָא at the end of the verse is strongly suggestive of an association between the messenger and the messenger of the covenant. The parallelism of the lines in 3:1b-c does not mean that the messenger of the covenant is to be identified with 'the Lord,' as so many scholars have claimed. Rather, the rhetorical device is more likely to have been used here to signify the notion that these two figures – the Lord and his messenger (i.e., the messenger of the covenant) – will both come in the end-time. For biblical parallelism is rarely a case of simple equation, repetition or restatement, as Jamel L. Kugel has so convincingly demonstrated. He states in his book, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, that "biblical lines are parallelistic not because B is meant to be a parallel of A, but because B typically *supports* A, carries it

further, backs it up, completes it, goes beyond it."[54] Using Kugel's terminology, the following may be said of our passage: 'Suddenly the Lord whom you are seeking will come to his temple,' and *what's more,* 'the messenger of the covenant whom you desire is coming.'[55] This is not a case of saying the same thing twice but with different words. The Lord is coming, but so is the messenger of the covenant. The two figures are not to be equated with each other.

The unusual title, מלאך הברית, almost certainly derives from the interpolator's attempt at defining further the identity and role of the מלאכי in 3:1a. Malachi's allusion to Exod 23:20 was recognized by the interpolator, who expanded the title of YHWH's messenger to 'the messenger of the covenant' on account of the messenger's strong connection to the covenant in the book of Exodus. Although Malchow does well to point out that the words מלאך and ברית show up together in only one other passage in the book of Malachi (2:4-7), all the evidence seems to suggest that the interpolator had his eye on 2:17-3:1a and not on the earlier oracle in the book. Thus, an identification of the messenger of the covenant with the priestly messiah is rather questionable. It is also not necessary to conclude that only a priestly figure would have been thought responsible for purifying the priesthood. It is conceivable that an angel could perform this task, which is probably what the interpolator had in mind. The language of 3:2 is reminiscent of that which is used elsewhere in the biblical

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[54] J. L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) 52.

[55] Kugel explains the relationship of the B-half of the parallelistic verse to the A-half by using the expression "what's more:" A is so, *what's more,* B is so. See Chapter One of *The Idea of Biblical Poetry,* 1-58.

writings to refer to the deity and to the day of his epiphany. Yet, YHWH is referred to in the third person in 3:3-4. For this reason, and because the act of purifying the Levites is presumably to be taken as the interpolator's understanding of what "clearing a way" before the Lord entails, the messenger of the covenant and not YHWH must be viewed as the subject of 3:2-4. The terminology and imagery used in these verses for the purifier and his role are surely more suited to describing a divine messenger than a human one. It is also not that unusual to think that a divine messenger sent by God as his agent or representative would be described using language that is more typically associated with the deity himself.

Mal 3:22-24: The Torah of Moses and the Return of Elijah

The majority of scholars today recognize the passage about the return of the prophet Elijah in Mal 3:23-24, along with the injunction to remember the Torah of Moses in 3:22, to be later additions to the text. Commentators are usually quick to stress the discontinuity between the style, message and tone of these appended verses and the oracles of Malachi. Smith, Mason and Petersen, for example, all refer to the shift from a series of dialogues in Malachi's oracles to statements of admonition and curse in 3:22-24.[56] Smith also highlights (although it is a less convincing argument) the use of stock Deuteronomistic words and

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[56] J. M. P. Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Malachi*, 81; Mason, *The Books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 159; Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 227.

phrases like "Horeb," "all Israel," "law of Moses" and "statutes and judgments" as evidence of editorial activity in the closing verses of the book. It has been claimed, too, that the harshness of the appendices seems to overshadow the message of hope present in the oracles and even diminishes the sense of immediacy one finds within some of the individual diatribes.[57] The most convincing reason for regarding the final verses as later additions to the text is the fact that the anonymous messenger of 3:1 is specifically identified by name as the prophet Elijah. Moreover, Elijah is assigned a very different role to play in the end-time than what was envisioned for the messenger in 3:1-4. It is true that these final verses share a number of themes with the rest of the book (e.g., the law, covenant, the day of the Lord), which has caused some scholars to regard them as authentic.[58] Yet it is nearly impossible to do so when confronted with the sudden and unanticipated introduction of Elijah into the book and the changing character and function of the eschatological messenger. The beginning and end of documents are usually prime locations for some sort of redactional activity to take place. The question is why these verses were appended by some scribal editor at the end of the book of Malachi and, especially for our purposes, why it was that the messenger was identified as Elijah and given a new task to perform?

The appendix begins in 3:22 with an injunction voiced by God:

זִכְרוּ תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אוֹתוֹ בְחֹרֵב
עַל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים׃

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[57] Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 232; Hill, *Malachi*, 364.

[58] Among those few scholars who argue for the integrity of the text are Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 251; Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 337-38; and Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, 245.

> Remember the Torah of Moses my servant, whom I commanded at Horeb concerning all Israel – statutes and ordinances![59]

Smith is absolutely correct to point out how heavily laden this verse is with terminology that is found repeatedly in the book of Deuteronomy and in the Deuteronomistic writings. Even though Malachi was deeply concerned with the observance of God's laws (cf. Mal 3:7), the reader of his book cannot help but notice the obvious disjunction between the final oracles in chapter 3 with their future, eschatological focus and the admonition in verse 22 with its emphasis on the present-day. Consequently, a number of scholars have speculated that the closing verses of Malachi were composed to serve, not as a summary of the book of Malachi, but as a postscript, epilogue or coda to some larger literary entity, whether that be the Book of the Twelve, the entire prophetic corpus, or the Torah and Prophets together.[60]

What is meant in v. 22 by the phrase "Torah of Moses?" It is not mentioned elsewhere in Malachi, nor has the name of Moses been uttered in the book before now. The delineation of the contents of the "Torah of Moses" is often debated by scholars and the suggestions range anywhere from the entire Pentateuch to the book of Deuteronomy to the lawbook of Ezra to the covenant code of Exodus 20-23.[61] However, a clue as to what the editor meant has been

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[59] In some LXX manuscripts this verse is positioned after 3:24, and presumably this was due, as J. M. P. Smith conjectures, to an unwillingness to end a book or a passage with a harsh saying; *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Malachi*, 83.

[60] See, for example, Hill, *Malachi*, 364-65; Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 232-33; Mason, *The Books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 238; Rudolph, *Haggai – Zechariah 1-8/9-14 – Malachi*, 291-93; Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 536; and P. L. Redditt, "Zechariah 9-14, Malachi, and the Redaction of the Book of the Twelve," in J. W. Watts and P. R. House, eds., *Forming Prophetic Literature* (JSOTSup 235; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1996) 245-46.

[61] See Hill, *Malachi*, 370.

given within the verse itself. The תורת משה that is to be remembered and observed is equivalent to the "statutes and ordinances" – חקים ומשפטים.[62] It is quite common to find these two words coupled together in the scriptures, particularly in the Deuteronomic literature and the Ezra-Nehemiah-Chronicles corpus. In Deut 4:8, 44-45, for example, we find that the essence of YHWH's Torah is described using these same two terms. Clearly, that is the understanding here: all the legislation of the Sinai covenant ascribed to Moses as YHWH's mediator and lawgiver. It is important to point out, too, that many of the fifth-century BCE (or later) references to the "Torah of Moses" in the scriptures specify that it is a written document (cf. 2 Chr 23:18; Ezra 3:2; Neh 8:1). A shift occurred in the understanding of God's law around the time of the Exile or Restoration, when the law became a fixed and unalterable body of written rules, as opposed to earlier unwritten concepts and principles of justice and righteousness recognized by the legal community.[63] This also led to a movement from a culture that was based on direct divine revelations to one based on their study and reinterpretation. In other words, exegetical revelation has replaced direct prophecy.[64] My reason for mentioning this will become clear in a moment.

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[62] I agree with Petersen here. "Remember" in Mal 3:22 does not mean what it does in Deuteronomy, that is, to recollect some earlier act of YHWH (Deut 7:18; 9:7, 27; 25:17). Rather, in our appendix, Israel is called to remember the torah and observe it. Torah includes "statutes and ordinances," which require obedience not simply recitation. See Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 228.

[63] See D. Patrick, *Old Testament Law* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985) 200-204.

[64] M. Fishbane, "From Scribalism to Rabbinism: Perspectives on the Emergence of Classical Judaism," in J. G. Gammie and L. G. Perdue, eds., *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990) 444.

The reference to Horeb in 3:22 as the place where God commanded Moses and established his covenant relationship with the people Israel is highly significant, for it is also the place where God "passed by" Elijah and commanded him concerning the future fate of Israel (cf. 1 Kgs 19). We have already talked at some length about Moses' portrayal as the quintessential prophet. In fact, Moses' unrivalled superiority as the recipient of divine revelations and the worker of wonders is made explicit in the closing coda of the Pentateuch:

> Never again did there arise in Israel a prophet like Moses whom the Lord singled out, face to face, for the various signs and portents that the Lord sent him to display in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his courtiers and his whole country, and for all the great might and awesome power that Moses displayed before all Israel (Deut 34:10-12).

However, our editor does not view Moses as a prophet, but rather as the one who received the Torah from YHWH. In emphasizing this role of Moses, the editor at the same time de-emphasizes his role as prophet. This rhetorical ploy opens the opportunity for another prophet, Elijah, to fill the role of "the prophet."

One must recall that Elijah is depicted as a "second Moses" in many of the narratives about him in the book of Kings. In fact, Elijah is the one who fulfills God's promise to raise up for the people a 'prophet like Moses' (Deut 18:18). Elijah may be the first in a line of prophets who resemble Moses, but he is the one who is more like Moses than any other. In this respect, Elijah is the proper Mosaic-type prophet. He is the "poster-boy" of the prophetic tradition. The coupling of these two figures – Moses and Elijah – in the appendices to the book of Malachi is by no means accidental. Moses can be thought to personify the Torah, while Elijah personifies the Prophets. Law and Prophecy have come

together. Andrew Hill has written: "The upshot of this union was the sanctioning of this prophetic corpus with the same divine authority accorded to the 'Torah of Moses.'"[65] For Hill, the prophets have become the rightful heirs of the Mosaic tradition.[66] On the contrary, I believe that Hill's statement needs to be reversed. In other words, the Law has become the rightful heir of the prophetic tradition. Remember the words of the 8th-century prophet Amos: "Indeed, my Lord God does nothing without having revealed his purpose to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). It was the prophets who were regarded as the true sources of divine authority, not the Mosaic Law. It was not until the exilic/postexilic period that the Torah of Moses, with all its "statutes and ordinances," displaced direct revelation and emerged as an authoritative body of texts to be used as legislation.

On the heels of this injunction to remember the Torah of Moses, God proclaims the following in 3:23:

הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי שֹׁלֵחַ לָכֶם אֵת אֵלִיָּה הַנָּבִיא
לִפְנֵי בּוֹא יוֹם יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא׃

Behold, I am sending to you the prophet Elijah
before the great and terrible day of YHWH comes.

The wording at the beginning of 3:23 is nearly identical to that of 3:1a, which has been shown to be an allusion to Exod 23:20. It is interesting that the scribal editor who penned these final verses to the text chose to follow the phrasing exactly as it is found in the Exodus passage rather than to repeat the slightly

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[65] Hill, *Malachi*, 370.

[66] Hill, *Malachi*, 372.

different wording that was produced by Malachi – that is, הנני שלח in 3:1a. A change such as this indicates that the editor was clearly aware that the prophet was alluding to the verse in Exodus. The editor, then, makes a very bold exegetical move by replacing the word מלאכי from the original oracle with את אליה הנביא (n.b., notice the assonance here), thereby identifying the eschatological messenger who will clear a way before YHWH as the prophet Elijah.[67] As I stated at the outset of this chapter, there is no reason to read this verse as anything but a reference to the literal and physical return to earth of the past Elijah who was taken up into heaven while still alive.

But why Elijah? Why did the final editor of the book of Malachi, or the Book of the Twelve or what have you, think that Elijah was the messenger about whom it was written in Mal 3:1a? On the one hand, the answer is fairly simple. He is absolutely the only figure who fits the profile of the מלאך no matter which way one wants to interpret Malachi's oracle. For Elijah is both a human messenger /prophet and a heavenly messenger/angel. Once he ascended into heaven, one has to presume that Elijah joined the rest of God's heavenly retinue – that is, that he became a member of the divine council. This fact coupled with an eschatological reading of YHWH's promise in Deut 18:18 to raise up in the future a 'prophet like Moses' makes the association of Elijah with the forerunner-messenger a surefire certainty.

Another reason why a prophet, especially a great prophet from Israel's past like Elijah, would be identified as the eschatological messenger has to do

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[67] The shortened form of the prophet's name is used – Eliya instead of Eliyahu – which is found elsewhere only in 2 Kgs 1. It is thought that the shortened forms of the longer, theophoric names are more characteristic of the Second Temple period. See the discussion about this in Chapter 1, page 21.

with Second Temple attitudes about prophecy and the role that prophecy would play in the future. In the second half of Mal 3:23, we read that God will send Elijah "before the great and terrible day of YHWH comes." This is an exact citation of Joel 3:4b. It must be considered significant that the editor chose to use precisely these words from the book of Joel and not from some other text in his reference to Elijah's return as YHWH's preparatory messenger. If one takes a look at the context of Joel 3:1-5, the reason becomes clear. A number of signs will occur before the day of the Lord comes, and one of those signs is the outpouring of God's spirit, which induces or inspires prophetic activity:

> And then it shall happen, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. I will even pour out my spirit upon male and female slaves in those days (Joel 3:1-2).

As David Petersen has claimed, 'true' or 'legitimate' prophecy (i.e., prophecy in its classical form) was considered a thing of the past by various postexilic prophets, whose task it was not to be prophets, but merely to reflect on the earlier prophetic words and to interpret them for their own age. "Such work," writes Petersen, "was performed by prophetic traditionists who placed their compositions, the deutero-prophetic literature, within the collections of the classical prophets."[68] By the mid-fifth century BCE, there was indeed a growing perception that prophecy in its traditional form was at an end, and there was even an intense hostility expressed toward the role of the prophet (cf. Zech 13:2-

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[68] Petersen, *Late Israelite Prophecy*, 45.

6; Jer 23:33-40).[69] Yet, prophecy remained a potential to be realized within society at some future time. Joel 3:1-2 clearly attests to the belief that prophecy would return again in the future, just prior to the Day of YHWH. Although it is slightly later in date, 1 Macc 9:27 also attests to the notion that prophecy had ceased in the present age, but a trustworthy prophet would arise at some future point (cf. 1 Macc 4:46; 14:41). Mal 3:23 represents another example of the expectation of prophecy's return in the future, except that this expectation is focused on a specific individual. Sigmund Mowinckel remarks that "[a]n age which had no prophets felt the need of men of God, filled with the spirit . . . Therefore they interpreted Malachi's words as a promise of a prophet of the old kind, one of the old prophets themselves; and whom was it more natural to expect than Elijah, who had not died, but had been taken up into heaven alive?"[70]

Before moving on to discuss the task of Elijah in the end-time, let us first speculate about the date at which these closing verses were appended at the end of the book of Malachi. The inclusion of the passage from Joel 3:4b provides a clue, at least with respect to the *terminus a quo*. At issue with the book of Joel is the fundamental unity of the text, although it has become widely accepted among scholars that the book is a collection of diverse traditions rather than a unified composition.[71] Joel 1-2 are commonly thought to have been written by

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[69] See E. M. Meyers, "The Crisis of the Mid-Fifth Century B.C.E. Second Zechariah and the "End" of Prophecy," in eds., D. P. Wright, D. N. Freedman and A. Hurvitz, *Pomegranates and Golden Bells* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995) 720-21.

[70] Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 299.

[71] T. Hiebert, "Joel, Book of," *ABD* 3:874.

one prophet interpreting a massive locust outbreak as divine judgment, while Joel 3-4 are thought to have been composed by a later apocalyptic writer anticipating the culmination of human history and the exaltation of Judah in a great cosmic conflict. The apocalyptic mentality which dominates Joel 3-4 is indicative of a fairly late date for this portion of the book as are the references to the Greeks (4:6), the dispersion of the Jews (4:2) and the return of the exiles (4:7). The reference to "the Greeks" (בני היונים) in particular points to a date for Joel 3-4 probably sometime in the earlier part of the Hellenistic period. Thus, the appendices to the book of Malachi were written at some point after the late 4th century BCE. Since Ben Sira paraphrases Mal 3:24 in his praise of the prophet Elijah (cf. 48:10), the time frame in which the appendices were composed narrows to somewhere roughly between 300 and 200 BCE.

The date of composition for the appendices has especially come into play with the interpretation of verse 24:

והשׁיב לב־אבות על־בנים ולב בנים על־אבותם
פן־אבוא והכיתי את־הארץ חרם׃

> He will restore the heart of fathers to sons and the heart of sons to their fathers, so that, when I come, I do not strike the land with utter destruction.

It is hard to know exactly what is intended by the phrase "to restore the heart" (השׁיב לב) because the only occurrence of it is in this verse. Smith, Mason and Rudolph have all argued that the editor had in mind the estrangement of fathers and sons on account of the latter's adoption of Hellenism.[72] As Mason puts it,

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[72] J. M. P. Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Malachi*, 83.; Mason, *The Books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 160-61; and Rudolph, *Haggai – Sacharja 1-8/9-14 – Maleachi*, 292.

"the fact that fathers and sons are mentioned could reflect the conditions of the Greek period when the younger generations grasped eagerly at Greek customs and thought, to the horror of their more orthodox parents." Naturally, this sort of interpretation of 3:24 is entirely dependent upon a late date for the appendices, which have been shown to be, in fact, a product of the Hellenistic period. But there isn't anything else in 3:23-24 that supports this reading. There is no indication that the increasing 'Hellenization' of Judahite society was a problem for the editor. Thus, linking the specific cause of what appears to be familial disharmony in 3:24 to the adoption of Greek customs and the Greek way of life is much too speculative to accept it as the motivation behind the editor's assigning this new task to Elijah.

Most other commentators argue instead that the phrase 'restoring the heart' has to do with either the idea of repentance or with the restoring of the covenant relationship. Glazier-McDonald holds the former position and translates the verse as follows: "And he will turn the heart of the fathers together with that of the children. And the heart of the children together with that of their fathers [to me]."[73] What she has done is to render the preposition עַל by "together with" and to supply an implied "to me (YHWH)" as the obvious referent to which their hearts or minds are being turned. It is true that the preposition עַל may be translated in this manner (cf. Exod 35:22; Job 38:32; Hos 10:14; Deut 22:6), and despite remarks to the contrary, the verb שׁוּב in the Hiphil is occasionally used to express the idea of repentance in the Hebrew scriptures.[74]

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[73] Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, 243.

[74] H. M. Teeple claims that the Hiphil of שׁוּב does not mean "repentance" in Hebrew usage. He also points out that in Jewish literature Elijah does not have this function of leading

We read both in Nehemiah and in Chronicles about prophets trying "to bring back" the people to YHWH (להשיבם אליך/אל־יהוה; Neh 9:26; 2 Chr 24:19; cf. also 2 Chr 19:4; Jer 23:22). The act of "turning (back)" to God is most often expressed by the verb שוב in its basic Qal form and is characterized by some change in the person. Repentance is an act of the "heart." It involves the individual's feelings, desire, reason and volition – and ultimately, one's behavior.[75]

The past Elijah was certainly not depicted as a prophet whose mission it was to call people to repentance. However, on account of his theology the Chronicler does give this function to Elijah in his history of Judah (2 Chr 21:12-15). Perhaps these differing views have something to do with the changes that took place in prophecy before and after the Exile. The question of whether the preaching of repentance should apply to the classical prophets is a vexed one. The tenor of the preexilic prophets' message is that the people should accept the justice of YHWH's impending punishment for their sins. But there is little doubt that the tenor of the postexilic prophets' message is that YHWH seeks moral reformation and renewal, and will reward those who do so with his favor. Thus, it is quite possible that Glazier-McDonald is correct here and that we should view the future Elijah's task as one that involves bringing the people, the younger and older generations alike, back to God. We must also remember that

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people to repentance until the late rabbinic text of *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* (edited 9th c. CE); *The Mosaic Eschatological Prophet*, 5-6. But see the discussion in Chapter 5 of this study.

[75] The "heart" in ancient Israelite anthropology is understood synthetically as the locus of all these things—a person's mind, affections and will. The only time that the word "heart" (לב) appears as the direct object of the verb שוב is here in Mal 3:24. However, the expression "to return with the whole heart" (שוב בכל לב) to YHWH can be found in 1 Kgs 8:48 and Jer 3:10; 24:7.

Mal 3:23-24 is a reinterpretation of Malachi's original oracle in 3:1. In our analysis of the original oracle, several possible interpretations of the phrase "to clear a way" were discussed. One way of understanding the phrase is in a figurative sense, that is, that the messenger's task is to remove the obstacle of the people's sinful conduct, which has been preventing the restoration and salvation of Israel (cf. Isa 57:14-15). The messenger is to preach repentance, in other words. For those who do not respond to this last chance offered by God, he will "draw near to them for judgment" (Mal 3:5).

But there are two reasons that hold me back from wholeheartedly accepting Glazier-McDonald's interpretation. The first has to do with the use of the words 'fathers' and 'sons' in this verse, which I find rather odd and puzzling. On the surface it would appear that families in the micro-level sense of the word are in view here, which is how Glazier-McDonald understands 'fathers' and 'sons.'[76] I have my doubts about this, which I will express momentarily. The second is the translation of the preposition על by "together with," because there is a close parallel to the wording of Mal 3:24 in Ezra 6:22: "for YHWH made them glad by *causing the heart of* the King of Assyria *to turn toward* them" (כי שׂמחם יהוה ויסב לב מלך־אשׁור עליהם). Here is an example of someone (in this case, YHWH) causing the heart/mind of someone else (the king) to turn toward others (the returned exiles).

Along similar lines, Verhoef and Hill interpret Elijah's task as having to do with covenant renewal or bringing people back to YHWH and to the demands of

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[76] Glazier-McDonald understands Elijah's ministry of reconciliation primarily as reform of the contemporary social order, at the micro-level of the family. This view results from her assumption that the appendix is original to Malachi, and thus, she reads 3:23-24 in light of passages like Mal 2:10-16; *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, 254.

his covenant. In support of this view, Verhoef and Hill stress the covenantal connotations of the term שׁוּב and the curse-like language of the second half of the verse – פֶּן־אָבוֹא וְהִכִּיתִי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ חֵרֶם ("so that, when I come, I do not strike the land with utter destruction").[77] Both scholars also take the terms אָבוֹת and בָּנִים to signify not fathers and sons in the general familial sense, but rather "forefathers" and "descendants." In other words, Elijah's task is to restore the current generation of faithless, postexilic Israelites to the Mosaic covenant of their faithful forefathers.[78] As Verhoef comments: "When Elijah comes he will restore the covenant relationship. In this process he will turn about the hearts of the wicked posterity to the hearts of them with whom God has entered into a covenant at Horeb."[79] Verhoef points to what he considers to be a parallel text, Isa 63:16, which suggests that the communication between the 'fathers' and the current generation of the prophet's day has been broken and can only resume again by way of a renewal of the covenant.[80] Isa 63:16 reads as follows: "Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us."

Petersen, too, highlights the covenantal associations of v. 24, though his interpretation differs from that of Verhoef and Hill. Petersen flip-flops the group that is the faithful one. In his view it is the "fathers" or ancestors (i.e., pre-Restoration Israelites) who are the sinners and the "sons" or descendants (i.e., current postexilic Judeans) who are the faithful. He draws attention to passages

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[77] Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 342-44; Hill, *Malachi*, 387-90.

[78] Hill, *Malachi*, 387-88.

[79] Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 342.

[80] Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 342.

like Ps 78, which tells of the sins and waywardness of "our fathers" and affirms that nothing breaks the continuity of Israel's history. As Exod 20:5-6 indicates, a curse in response to covenant violations could extend over several generations. If one links this understanding to Israel's experience of the late sixth and early fifth centuries BCE, namely, of living a disrupted existence because of the "sins" of the fathers, one can imagine that the issue here in Mal 3:24 involves nothing less than Judean Yahwist's relationship to their ancestors. According to Petersen, "Yahweh will send Elijah to enable Judean Yahwists, who have followed the covenant dictates, to achieve some sort of reconciliation with their normative religious traditions and to survive Yahweh's moment of truth."[81]

Thus Verhoef and Hill understand Elijah's task in v. 24 in essentially the same way that Glazier-McDonald does. That is, they believe the prophet's role involves bringing the people back to God and to his covenant. There are two plusses that Verhoef and Hill's interpretation have over against Glazier-McDonald's. The first is the way in which they make better sense of the presence of the words "fathers" and "sons" in this context, especially considering the appeal in vv. 22-23 to two prominent 'forefathers' of Israel's history.[82] The second is the fact that no phrases have to be implied or 'understood' by the reader. Petersen's reading of the text is less convincing, for there is nothing in the appendix or in the book of Malachi itself that even hints at the author or editor struggling with the sense that his contemporary society continues to suffer on account of the sins of the fathers. Quite to the contrary, the message of

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[81] Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 232.

[82] Note, too, that Malachi consistently appeals to the past in his oracles; cf. 2:10, 12; 3:4.

Malachi is that the good times have not come as expected because the people of Judah have broken faith with God just as their ancestors had done. The success of Verhoef and Hill's interpretation, however, relies heavily on the prevalence of covenant language in this verse and in the appendix as a whole. Let us consider some of these associations more closely.

It is obvious that the verb שׁוּב, from its many uses in the Hebrew scriptures to indicate apostasy ('turning away' from God) and repentance ('turning back' to God), has strong covenantal connotations.[83] As for the word "fathers" being used in the context of covenant rupture/renewal, there is one scriptural passage that is particularly illuminating. The oracle in Zech 1:2-6 employs the term אבות in the sense of "forefathers," indicating the generations prior to the Exile, and relates how the 'former prophets' sought to bring the 'forefathers' back to YHWH, but they did not obey. Zechariah admonishes his contemporaries with the words of YHWH: "Do not be like your forefathers" (אל־תהיו כאבותיכם) and "Turn back to me" (שׁובו אלי). Naturally, Elijah would have to be considered as one of these "former prophets" who tried to get the people to turn back from their evil ways. With regard to our verse in Malachi, who better is there to bring about reconciliation between the present order and the previous state of things – that is, to restore the integrity between generations – than Elijah? For Elijah is uniquely a part of both worlds, past and present or future.

The admonitory use of the particle פֶּן ("lest") as a portent of divine judgment is especially common in the book of Deuteronomy. At least thirteen of

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[83] See W. L. Holladay, *The Root SUBH in the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1958) 87-116.

the twenty-seven occurrences of the particle are directly or indirectly related to the threat of YHWH's curse for covenant violations (e.g., Deut 6:12, 15; 8:11, 12; etc.). Here with the prefixing non-perfective (פן־אבוא) the construction expresses contingency. However, it is surely not YHWH's arrival that is revocable but rather the curse. Implicit in this is God's capacity to change his mind and repent from following through on the threat of divine judgment (cf. Jer 18:8; Jon 3:9-10; 4:2). The root חרם signifies an object or person consecrated (for sacral use) or condemned for destruction. It is most often used in the scriptures in the context of so-called Holy War, where the enemy and anything belonging to him was חרם and under penalty of death could not be taken as plunder (e.g., Josh 6:17-18; 7:1ff.; 1 Sam 15:21). In addition to Mal 3:24, this technical term occurs in the Book of the Twelve only in Zech 14:11, which states that upon YHWH's victory over the enemies of Israel in the eschaton "never again shall destruction (חרם) be decreed, and Jerusalem shall dwell secure." Given the covenant context of the curse in v. 24, הארץ must not mean the earth in a global sense, but "land" in a more restricted or territorial sense.

Understanding Mal 3:24 in the context of Israel's covenant relationship with YHWH is likely to be correct, especially if one takes stock of the appendix as a whole. In 3:22 YHWH exhorts his people to remember (and do) the Torah of Moses and even mentions Horeb as the locus of the divine revelation. In 3:23 YHWH promises to send his messenger, Elijah, who also encountered the divine at Horeb and who is unmistakably the 'prophet like Moses.' Moreover, words drawn directly from the Covenant Code (Exod 23:20) are used in making the announcement. Elijah, who was so exceedingly zealous for YHWH in the past that he would not tolerate allegiances to any other god, will now be the one to

bring people back to YHWH and to restore the covenant relationship. Elijah is their last hope. If they fail to obey him, they and their land will be utterly and finally destroyed. Remember, too, that Mal 3:23-24 is a reinterpretation of Malachi's original oracle in 3:1. The language of the original oracle (2:17-3:1a; 3:5) was also covenantal, strongly echoing the characteristics of Deuteronomic rhetoric.

Having said all that, a review of the LXX translator's rendition of Mal 3:24 might lead us to question our interpretation of that verse. The Greek of Mal 3:23-24 reads as follows:

> καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω ὑμῖν Ηλιαν τὸν Θεσβίτην πρὶν ἐλθεῖν ἡμέραν κυρίου τὴν μεγάλην καὶ ἐπιφανῆ,
>
> ὃς ἀποκαταστήσει καρδίαν πατρὸς πρὸς υἱὸν καὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου πρὸς τὸν πλησίον αὐτοῦ, μὴ ἔλθω καὶ πατάξω τὴν γῆν ἄρδην.
>
> Behold I am sending to you Elijah the Thesbite, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes.
>
> He will restore the heart of father to son and the heart of man to his neighbor, so that I will not come and strike the land utterly.

In comparing the LXX of 3:23-24 with the MT, several important differences stand out. Elijah is called "the Thesbite" rather than simply "the prophet" in v. 23. This change in wording more strongly calls to mind the narratives in the book of Kings, where Elijah is referred to as the Tishbite on numerous occasions (cf. 1 Kgs 17:1; 21:17, 28; 2 Kgs 1:3, 8; 9:36). More significant changes occur in v. 24, the first half of which has been retained except that the singular πατρός and υἱόν are used instead of the plural "fathers" and "sons." The second half of the verse is quite different. Instead of the reverse of the phrase, 'the heart of

sons to their fathers,' the LXX has 'the heart of man to his neighbor.' Lastly, and this is perhaps the most considerable deviation from the wording of the MT, the verb והשיב is not translated as ἐπιστρέψει ("he will turn/make to repent") but as ἀποκαταστήσει ("he will restore/re-establish"). Even in Neh 9:26 and 2 Chr 19:4 and 24:19, those passages that we mentioned above in the context of Mal 3:24 because they speak about prophets "bringing back" (השיב) people to God, the LXX uses the verb ἐπιστρέφω.

What do these changes in wording mean? For one thing, it would seem to signify that the LXX translator did not understand Elijah's task to be one of calling the people to repentance. Nor does it appear that the translator viewed his role as a restorer of the covenant relationship, and certainly not involving 'ancestors' and 'descendants' in some sort of cross-generational reconciliation. Rather the translator seems to have understood Mal 3:24 to be about personal relationships between family members. Thus Elijah is to serve as the restorer of shattered relationships. However, the translator did not wish to limit Elijah's purview just to that of the family on the micro-level, that is, between 'father' and 'son.' Interestingly enough, he adds to the importance of Elijah's role in the end-time by enlarging the scope to include the integrity of relationships between fellow Judeans. The Greek phrase ἀνθρώπος/ἀνὴρ πρὸς τὸν πλησίον αὐτοῦ ("a man to his neighbor") consistently translates the Hebrew phrase איש את/אל־רעהו ("one to another" or "a man to his fellow") in the LXX.[84] The word רע can mean 'friend,' 'fellow,' or simply another person with whom one stands in reciprocal relations. The term does not typically extend to non-Israelites. By 'fellow' is meant a 'fellow-citizen.' So Elijah's role in the LXX of

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[84] E.g., Gen 11:3; Judg 6:29; 7:22; 10:18; Mal 3:16, etc.

Mal 3:24 is not at the universal level, involving the Gentiles, but rather at the macro-level of the Israelite/Judean family.

Does this mean that the Hebrew text of Mal 3:24 is really about restoring family harmony as the LXX translator seems to have thought? I don't believe so. The words and images employed in the three verses of the appendix hint strongly at a covenant context. Seeing the message here as one of family discord and Elijah's role as a peacemaker strikes me as awfully out of place within the context of the appendix as a whole. Moreover, the past Elijah is never portrayed as a harmonizer or family therapist. On the contrary, Elijah was the 'troubler' of Israel and so fiercely zealous for the worship of YHWH alone that even his name proclaimed whose side he was on – "YHWH is my God." It is impossible to understand why the LXX translator made the changes to the text that he did and I think it wise not to speculate on this. The Greek text did have major repercussions for the understanding of the eschatological Elijah and his role in the end-time. For in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus proclaims in response to the disciples' question of 'why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first:' "Elijah is indeed coming first *to restore all things*" (ἀποκαθιστάνει πάντα; 9:11-12).

Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter that there is plenty that is new about the portrayal of Elijah in the books of Chronicles and Malachi. Elijah's purview is extended to include not only the geographical region of Judah or Yehud, but also the temporal region of the future in addition to the past. He retains the role of

oracle-giver or doomsayer familiar from the narratives in Kings in his brief appearance, or 'non-appearance' as the case may be, in the Chronicler's History. But on account of the Chronicler's theory of divine retribution, the warning that Elijah writes to the king functions also to give Jehoram the opportunity to repent and to return to the Lord. Jehoram, of course, does not repent and so his destruction of family relations, both at the nuclear and national level, results in the most personal of punishments – the destruction of himself and his entire household.

A major typological shift occurs in the understanding of Elijah in the book of Malachi, where he becomes the prophet of the *eschaton*. We have argued in the course of this chapter that the original oracle in Malachi consisted only of the announcement of the arrival of YHWH's messenger in 3:1a. God's messenger, who is not as yet identified with Elijah, may be seen as either a prophet or an angel, since the oracle alludes to both Exod 23:20 and Isa 40:3. The messenger is to "clear a way" before YHWH comes in judgment. By 'clearing a way,' Malachi may have meant either one of two things: 1) borrowing the common ancient Near Eastern parlance of the processional way, the task of the messenger is simply to clear the road for the safe and imminent arrival of the King/YHWH and to announce his coming to his hosts; 2) understanding "way" in a metaphorical sense, the task of the messenger is to change the hearts and minds of the people, to preach repentance. "Remove the stumbling-block from the way of my people," proclaimed Trito-Isaiah. What is preventing the Israelites from experiencing salvation is their sinful conduct. If only they would repent, the 'way' would be clear and YHWH could come in peace rather than in judgment.

The appendix in Mal 3:22-24, which was added to the text sometime in the Hellenistic period, specifically identifies YHWH's messenger as the prophet Elijah.[85] Clearly, Mal 3:23-24 is a reinterpretation of Malachi's original oracle. The concern for covenant obedience and the language of covenant, which are only implicit in the original oracle, are made explicit in the appendix. The Torah of Moses and the prophet Elijah are mentioned in tandem. Law and Prophecy have conjoined. The scribal editor who penned these final verses obviously understood the messenger's task of 'clearing a way' in the metaphorical manner described above. Elijah, then, is to make the people repent and to bring them back to the Torah of Moses and to the covenant relationship of their forefathers, else on the Day of Judgment those whose hearts have not turned will feel the awesome and terrible wrath of God. Elijah is the last hope for God's people. He was the first in a line of prophets who resembled Moses and it is only fitting that he should also be the last. For the editor of the appendix, Elijah is the final and decisive figure before the end-time.

N.B. A brief and interesting thing to note as well is the fact that everything in Mal 3:1b-4 was completely ignored by the editor. There is no mention of, or allusion to, the Temple, priests, Levites, sacrifices or offerings, and there is no language of fire, purging or purification anywhere in the appendix. This leads me to suspect that 3:1b-4 was inserted into the text even later than the composition of the appendix.[86]

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[85] For the argument on the date of the appendix in 3:22-24, see p. 112 above.

[86] This is precisely what Bruce Malchow has argued. He dates the interpolation to sometime around 165 BCE. See p. 97 n. 51 above.

CHAPTER 3

Elijah in the Book of Ben Sira

For the next texts in the developing tradition about the eschatological Elijah, we must go outside of the Hebrew canon of scriptures to the book of Ben Sira and the scrolls from Qumran. Both Ben Sira and the authors of the Dead Sea scrolls wrote their works at roughly the same time and place, that is, in Palestine towards the end of the first millennium BCE. Thus one would expect some overlap between the worldview of Ben Sira and that of the Qumran covenanters, and indeed, a comparison of their writings does reveal a number of shared concerns and perspectives. But on the whole, the two are worlds apart from each other, for Ben Sira's thoughts and teachings remain primarily focused on this world, while the instructions and prayers of the Qumran community are overwhelmingly preoccupied with the world-to-come. Yet in both Ben Sira's book of wisdom and in certain of the Qumran scrolls, the belief in the returning Elijah is clearly expressed, and with a new, or expanded, understanding of his character and mission. First, we shall begin with the book of Ben Sira since it was written some decades before the Dead Sea community was founded.

Ben Sira: The Author and the Text

It may strike one as odd that Ben Sira would allude to the eschatological Elijah at all in his book of wisdom, although only two verses within the fifty-one chapters deal with the coming of the future prophet (48:10-11). Of those verses treating the topic of the *eschaton* more generally, there are also relatively few; and they were more than likely inserted into the book at a later date anyhow (cf. 36:1-22; Gk: 33:1-13a; 36:16b-22). Instead, the bulk of Ben Sira's book has to do with practical advice on everyday matters. Since Sirach's interests are so firmly rooted in the present, the authenticity of the two verses that discuss the expected return of Elijah has naturally been questioned. Some scholars want to claim that the sage never expressed any sort of messianic or eschatological hopes whatsoever in his writings. It is true that Ben Sira does not make any references to a Davidic messiah. But this is to be expected given the absence of any messianic hope, in the sense of hope for the restoration of the Davidic line, in the writings of the Second Temple period prior to the Hasmonean era. The expectation of the return of Elijah is an entirely different issue. Shortly after the pronouncement of Elijah's return was made in the appendix to Malachi the role of the future Elijah was expanded in the book of Sirach to include the restoration of the twelve tribes and what may be, at least according to the grandson's translation, the resurrection of the dead as well. The purpose of the analysis that follows is to explain the presence of these two novel elements in the tradition – from whence did they come and why?

It is not often the case that we possess a good bit of information about the author of an ancient text, but portions of Ben Sira's work are clearly autobiographical in nature. For instance, we know that Sirach was a rather

financially secure and prominent scribe who devoted himself to the study of the Torah, who served among the important men of his day and who traveled to foreign lands (cf. 38:34-39:5). It seems that he also resided in Jerusalem, where he probably had a school or "house of instruction" in which to teach young men the wisdom that he had acquired throughout his lifetime (cf. 50:27; 51:23). We also know that Ben Sira composed his book of wisdom sometime in the early part of the second century BCE. The sage's praise for the high priest Simon II (cf. 50:1-20), who held the office from 219 to 196 BCE, effectively rules out any date of composition for the book that is earlier than the beginning of the second century. Likewise, any date later than 175 BCE should not be entertained on account of Sirach's failure to remark on or allude to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Maccabees or any of the troublesome events associated with these individuals.[1] After migrating to Egypt Sirach's own grandson produced the Greek translation of the book, which was published shortly after the death of Ptolemy VII in 117 BCE. The relationship between the Greek translation and the Hebrew original is a complicated one about which more will be said later.

The Wisdom of Ben Sira most closely resembles the biblical book of Proverbs in both form and content, as a sizeable portion of the text consists of one-line aphorisms and is taken up with practical advice about relations with family and friends and other aspects of social and ethical behavior. The book of Sirach also contains larger literary units, such as hymns of praise to God and to

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[1] As DiLella comments, "[i]t is reasonable to assume that if Ben Sira had written his book during the disastrous years of Antiochus IV, he would have made some direct or indirect reference to the suffering the pious Jews endured. But he does not. Accordingly, it is safe to conclude that Ben Sira had died before 175 B.C., the year of Antiochus IV's accession to the throne, or at least had finished and published his book before that date." See P. W. Skehan and A. A. DiLella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (AB 39; New York: Doubleday, 1987) 10.

Wisdom (1:1-10; 18:1-7; 24:1-34; 39:12-35; 42:15-43:33; 51:1-12), prayers of petition (22:27-23:6; 36:1-22) and an autobiographical poem (51:13-30). These are all forms of expression that occur with some frequency in the book of Psalms and in the wisdom literature of Israel. What is most unusual to find in Ben Sira, at least with respect to literary forms, is the last major section of the book entitled in Hebrew the "Praise of the Fathers of Old" (44:1-50:24), which is a kind of hymnic poem praising various pious individuals of biblical history. The presence of this lengthy poem in Ben Sira is exceptional because there is no precedent in the biblical writings for this sort of review of history.[2] One of the hallmarks of the biblical wisdom literature is the lack of concern for or interest in the distinctive traditions of Israel or its history. It is within this section on the "Praise of the Fathers" that the deeds of the past Elijah are eulogized and the prophet's future return to earth is anticipated.

The Praise of the Fathers

Ben Sira's "Praise of the Fathers" represents a unique textual example of Jewish literature. As Burton Mack explains, "it is the earliest poem on record in which figures of Israel's epic are presented as the sole subject of a literary composition expressly to be eulogized."[3] Ben Sira does not attempt to retell the history of his

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[2] J. J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997) 97.

[3] B. L. Mack, *Wisdom and the Hebrew Epic: Ben Sira's Hymn in Praise of the Fathers* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985) 1.

people in a new way like the Chronicler, nor does he write a continuous historical narrative. Rather, he singles out individuals as examples to be praised. The review of biblical heroes begins with Noah and ends with Nehemiah, all the while following a strict chronological order.[4] The length of each of the poem units varies anywhere from just a verse or two for figures like Noah, Isaac and Nathan to ten or more verses for men like Aaron, David, Solomon and Elijah. Each hero is lauded for his religious virtues and for the glorious deeds he performed or with which he was associated. The Hebrew Scriptures clearly serve as the basis for the sage's characterizations of these great men. However, Ben Sira is also highly selective in the material he chooses to present for each individual, drawing his information from various scriptural passages and combining or arranging the descriptive details in new and unique ways.[5]

Because Ben Sira's review of the ancestors of Israel's past follows the order of the Hebrew Scriptures, praises are first heaped upon the great men of the Pentateuchal narratives. This is succeeded by eulogies for Joshua and Caleb, the Judges and the early monarchs. Having arrived at the period of the monarchy, Sirach then proceeds to correlate kings and prophets. Influenced significantly by the standard Deuteronomic perspective on the righteousness of individual kings,

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[4] The initial mention of Enoch in Sir 44:16 is textually suspect. It is not found in the Masada manuscript or in the Syriac, although it is in the Greek and Hebrew MS B; Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 100.

[5] This procedure of selecting and combining disparate biblical texts is often described as being midrashic or "proto-midrashic." While there is little doubt that Ben Sira's hymn contains what may be considered midrashic elements, this does not mean that the "Praise of the Fathers" should be classified as such [see the discussion in T. R. Lee, *Studies in the Form of Sirach 44-50* (SBLDS 75; Atlanta: Scholars, 1986) 48-54]. The most promising generic classification to date is the Hellenistic encomium – a genre originally developed by Isocrates around the 4th century BCE, the purpose of which was to praise the virtues of persons worthy of commemoration.

Ben Sira sees fit to honor by name only four monarchs: David, Solomon, Hezekiah and Josiah. The prophets who receive recognition include Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Job and the twelve. Of these, the prophet Elijah clearly takes center stage. The praise of Elijah consists of eleven verses in all (48:1-11) and is part of a slightly larger literary unit that also lauds the wonders performed by Elijah's successor, Elisha. Sirach 48:12-14 honors Elisha while 48:15a-d closes the unit with a reference to the people's persistence in sinning, despite the work of Elijah and Elisha, and the resultant exile of Israel in 722 BCE.[6]

The eleven verses on Elijah may be subdivided in a variety of different ways, but the most simple division is to deal with those verses that recall the prophet's past character and deeds (vv. 1-9) separate from those that delineate his role in the future (vv. 10-11). Although our primary concern is to explicate the portrayal of the eschatological Elijah in 48:10-11, it is important nonetheless to consider the rest of what Ben Sira had to say about the prophet.

Sir 48:1-9: The Glorious Deeds of the Past Elijah

On the heels of mentioning the ever-increasing sinfulness of the northerners who followed the idolatrous example set by Jeroboam comes the opening verse of our unit (48:1):

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[6] On the structure of this unit see R. Hildesheim, *Bis daß ein Prophet aufstand wie Feuer. Untersuchungen zum Prophetenverständnis des Ben Sira in Sir 48,1 – 49,16* (Trierer Theologische Studien 58; Trier: Paulinus, 1996) 53-59.

עד אשר קם נביא כאש ודבריו כתנור בוער׃

Until a prophet like fire rose up, whose words were like a burning oven.

Instead of referring to Elijah by name, Ben Sira prefers to start off by designating him as a "prophet like fire" (נביא כאש). The description is certainly an apt one because Elijah is associated with fire more than once in the Kings narratives. On no fewer than three occasions does the prophet call down fire from heaven, once to devour the sacrifice on Mt. Carmel and twice to consume Ahaziah's captains and their fifty men (cf. 1 Kgs 18:37-38; 2 Kgs 1:10, 12). The fire imagery is carried even further by describing the prophet's words/actions as being "like a burning oven" (כתנור בוער). Interestingly, the phrase "burning like an oven" (בער כתנור) is found only once in the Hebrew Bible in Mal 3:19, where Malachi explains what the approaching day of YHWH will be like for all the evildoers.[7] The proximity of this verse to Mal 3:23-24 wherein God announces the sending of his prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of YHWH comes is probably not a coincidence. Thus, it would appear that Ben Sira both begins and ends his praise of Elijah (cf. 48:10) with allusions to the book of Malachi and to the prophet's eschatological role.

However, the allusion to Mal 3:19 is not picked up by the sage's grandson.[8] The Greek translation of Sir 48:1 shows several significant divergences from the Hebrew original:

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[7] J. G. Snaith, "Biblical Quotations in the Hebrew of Ecclesiasticus," *Journal of Theological Studies* 18 (1967) 8. This sort of citation is described by Beentjes as an "inverted quotation;" P. C. Beentjes, "Inverted Quotations in the Bible: A Neglected Stylistic Pattern," *Biblica* 63 (1982) 515.

[8] The LXX of Mal 3:19 has κλίβανος "oven."

Καὶ ἀνέστη Ηλίας προφήτης ὡς πῦρ,
καὶ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ ὡς λαμπὰς ἐκαίετο·

Then Elijah arose, a prophet like fire,
and his word was like a burning torch.

The first thing to notice is that the grandson provides the name Elijah here, which certainly weakens the mysteriousness achieved by Sirach's decision to withhold the name of the prophet until verse 4. The translator also opts for the singular "his word/speech," and the singular image of a burning torch is substituted for the burning oven. Now, on the whole scholars have given preference to the Hebrew text of Ben Sira over against its Greek witnesses. Preference is unanimously given to the Hebrew text here in 48:1 simply because כתנור בוער is a biblical phrase from Mal 3:19. How odd it is, though, to compare someone's words to an oven or furnace. What would this mean exactly? Commentators are at a loss to explain the image. But what about the 'burning torch' in the Greek text? Is that really any less puzzling of an image? Well, as a matter of fact it is. As Naphthali Wieder explains, the image of the burning torch was often used to refer to the "superlative nature of a great man's words."[9] Various inspired sages, teachers or interpreters of the Law are described as "fiery sparks" or "flaming torches," or as having "fire issuing from their mouths," fire being symbolic of the Torah. Many of the textual examples that Wieder cites are found in the Talmud and other early rabbinic sources, but one can also find the metaphor being used of the Interpreter of the Law in the

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[9] N. Wieder, "The 'Law-Interpreter' of the Sect of the Dead Sea Scrolls: The Second Moses," *JJS* 4 (1953) 164.

Damascus Document from Qumran and in the book of *4 Ezra*.[10] Consequently, Wieder argues, and I must concur, that the Greek version has preserved the original reading in this case. The Hebrew divergence from the Greek can easily be accounted for as due to the intention of imitating the biblical idiom. Thus, Ben Sira begins his praise of Elijah by highlighting the extraordinary power of the prophet's words and his connection to the Law.

Verse 2 of the Hebrew text reads as follows:

וישבר להם מטה לחם ובקנאתו המעיטם׃

He broke their staff of bread,
and by his zeal he made them few in number.

The Hebraic expression שבר מטה־לחם, translated literally as "to break the staff of bread," means essentially "to cause a famine" (cf. Lev 26:26; Ezek 4:16, 5:16, 14:13; Pss 105:16). This is obviously a reference to the three-year drought that Elijah brought about at the beginning of his career (cf. 1 Kgs 17:1; 18:1-2). In all the biblical passages where the expression "to break the staff of bread" occurs it is within the context of divine punishment. Although no explicit reason is given in the book of Kings to account for Elijah's decision to command a drought, one could infer from the surrounding context that it was meant to punish King Ahab

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[10] One particularly illuminating example that Wieder gives is from *b. Baba Mes.* 85b. R. Zera relates how the departed R. Jose b. Hanina appeared to him in a dream and told him of the seating arrangements in the Heavenly Academy for various deceased scholars. He learned to his consternation that R. Yohanan bar Nappaha was not allocated a seat next to R. Hiyya, and asked: "Is not R. Yohanan worthy to sit next to R. Hiyya?" Whereupon R. Jose replied: "Who could allow Bar Nappaha to enter the region of *fiery sparks and flaming torches*?" See pp. 162-64 of "The 'Law-Interpreter' of the Sect" for other examples from talmudic-midrashic texts. As to the passage from Qumran, see CD 6:10-11 and pp. 161-62 of Wieder's article for an explanation. In *4 Ezra* 13:10-11, the "Man from the Sea" (=Messiah) is described as "sending forth from his mouth something like a stream of fire, and from his lips a flaming breath, and from his tongue he shot forth a storm of sparks." In the interpretation of this vision, the fiery stream is allegorized to represent the Law, "which is symbolized by the fire" (cf. *4 Ezra* 13:37-38).

for his idolatrous behavior (cf. 1 Kgs 16:30-33). It is interesting to note that in Lev 26:26 YHWH proclaims that he will "break the staff of bread" of the Israelite people if they ever fail to observe all his commandments or break his covenant.

The Greek translator once again diverges slightly from the wording of the Hebrew. In most instances the LXX renders the expression "to break the staff of bread" literally as συντρίβειν στήριγμα ἄρτου. Sirach's grandson produces a less poetic and more simplified reading that merely captures the overall sense of the original, perhaps for a Hellenized audience who might no longer fully understand the meaning of the Hebraic expression. The Greek reads simply, ὃς ἐπήγαγεν ἐπ' αὐτοὺς λιμὸν, "who brought a famine upon them."

The second half of verse 2 tells how Elijah "made them few in number by his zeal." Elijah twice described himself as being exceedingly zealous for YHWH when he was on Mt. Horeb (cf. 1 Kgs 19:10, 14). The reason for his zealousness was because the Israelites had forsaken God's covenant. The Israelites were indeed made "few in number" when Elijah slaughtered 450 of them who were serving as prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18:40). Immediately after Elijah carried out this act of zeal, the rains came and the drought ended.

In Sir 48:3 the sage writes:

בדבר אל עצר שמים [יורד שלש] אשות:

By the word of God he shut up the heavens,
and brought down three fires.

In 1 Kgs 17:1, Elijah shut up the skies when he abruptly announced to Ahab that "there will be no dew or rain except by my word." The expression "to shut up the heavens" [עצר (את־ה)שמים] is found in the Scriptures in Deut 11:17 in the

context of warning the people about the effects of God's anger against them if they serve other gods (cf. also 1 Kgs 8:35; 2 Chr 6:26; 7:13). Notice, however, Sirach's claim that it is "by God's word" (בדבר אל) that Elijah performs this act of withholding rain. This is not the case in the biblical narrative; at least not explicitly so. There the prophet proclaims that the drought will only come to an end when he says so ("except by *my* word;" כי אם־לפי דברי). Although Elijah prefaces his proclamation with an oath ("as YHWH lives, the God of Israel whom I serve"), his act of withholding rain (and bringing down fire from heaven) is not explicitly said to be in response to a command from the deity. Ben Sira makes it undeniably clear that Elijah acted through the power of, and on behalf of, God, and that the word of the prophet and the word of God are one and the same.[11]

In verse 4, Ben Sira finally mentions the name Elijah and begins to directly address the prophet in the second person:

מה נורא אתה אליהו אשר כמוך יתפאר׃

How awesome you are, Elijah! Whoever is like you,
let him preen!

Here the sage praises the unique person of Elijah without any reference to deeds he has performed. Though that is not the case with the grandson's translation, which extols the prophet's miracles rather than his person ("How glorious you were, Elijah, *in your wondrous deeds*"— ἐν θαυμασίοις σου). Ben Sira describes Elijah as one who inspires awe or reverence (נורא). The Hebrew verb

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[11] See J. Lévêque, "Le Portrait d'Élie dans l'Éloge des Pères (Si 48, 1-11)," in R. Kuntzmann, ed., *Ce Dieu qui vient* (Lectio Divina 159; Paris: Cerf, 1995) 220.

ירא in the *Niph'al* is nearly always used in the biblical writings as an attribute of God or of things associated with the deity, such as the day of his coming, angels, or a place of theophany. The second colon of the verse clearly has a rhetorical force, for it is doubtful that Ben Sira believed there truly could be anyone quite like Elijah.

Stylistically speaking, verses 5 –10 belong together as each commences with an articulated participle. The second person, direct address from verse 4 is continued in the translation. Verse 5 reads:

המקים גוע ממות ומשאול ברצון יי׳׃

You raised a corpse from death, from Sheol according to the will of YHWH.

Ben Sira refers here to Elijah's raising of the Zarephathite widow's son in 1 Kgs 17:17-24. He describes this resurrection as being in accordance with YHWH's will. Yet in the biblical narrative, it is Elijah who takes the initiative to bring the child back to life after the boy's mother rebukes him and essentially blames him for the death of her son. Elijah works his miracle by stretching out over the child three times and then invoking the Lord by name. Next, we are told that YHWH "obeyed Elijah" (וישמע יהוה בקול אליהו; 17:22) and the child's life returned to his body. As noted in Chapter One, it is really YHWH who controls the forces of life and death, and it is YHWH who revives the child in answer to Elijah's petition. Once again Ben Sira emphasizes the fact that Elijah acts as God's representative. Everything Elijah says and does is on YHWH's behalf or according to his will.

Sirach 48:6 has this to say about the prophet:

המוריד מלכים על שחת ונכבדים ממטותם׃

You sent kings down to the pit, nobles from their sickbeds.

Here ἀπώλειαν, "destruction," is used by the grandson to render the more concrete Hebrew word שחת meaning "pit," a place more or less synonymous with Sheol. In the previous verse, Sirach mentioned Elijah's association with bringing the dead to life but now he lauds the prophet's power to bring about one's death. The kings whom Elijah supposedly "sent down to the pit" are Ahab and his descendants (cf. 1 Kgs 21:21-24). The "nobles" or "honored ones" (נכבדים) who never recovered from their injuries or illnesses are presumably King Ahaziah (cf. 2 Kgs 1:4, 6, 16-17) and King Jehoram of Judah (cf. 2 Chr 21:12-15). Elijah pronounced oracles of doom and destruction against each of these kings and in each instance his prophecy was fulfilled.

The Hebrew text of verse 7 is written as follows:

והשמיע בסיני תוכחות ובחורב משפטי נקם׃

Obviously the sage is alluding here to Elijah's encounter with God on Mt. Horeb, which he regards as identical with Sinai, in 1 Kgs 19. The Greek text must be preferred in this case over the Hebrew, for the Hebrew has והשמיע ("and he proclaimed") at the beginning of the verse, while the Greek has instead ὁ ἀκούων ("you heard"). According to the episode in 1 Kgs 19, Elijah *heard* reproofs from God at Mt. Horeb (cf. 19:9, 13), he did not himself proclaim any threats or judgments of vengeance. Moreover, Sir 48:5-10 all begin in the Hebrew text with an articulated participle (e.g., המקים in v. 5, המוריד in v. 6, המושח in v. 8, הנלקח in v. 9, and הכתוב in v. 10). In agreement with Smend, והשמיע should be emended to השומע in *scriptio plena*, which would coincide nicely with

the Greek ὁ ἀκούων.[12] Thus Sir 48:7 may be translated as: "You heard chastisements at Sinai; at Horeb, judgments of vengeance." Now, the story of Elijah's journey to Mt. Horeb in 1 Kgs 19 stands out somewhat from the rest of the Elijah narratives because it characterizes the prophet as the despairing hero who is frightened, who desires his own death, and who has essentially given up the fight (19:1-8). Naturally, Ben Sira prefers not to draw attention to this aspect of Elijah's character. Within the context of the account on Mt. Horeb, the תוכחות and משפטי נקם that Elijah heard must be associated with YHWH's decrees given in 1 Kgs 19:17-18: "Whoever escapes the sword of Hazael shall be slain by Jehu, and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu shall be slain by Elisha. I will leave in Israel only seven thousand . . ."

This leads us directly to the next verse, which is interchanged with v. 7 in the Hebrew text of MS B but we will continue to refer to it as verse 8. Sirach 48:8 is written as follows:

המושח מלא תשלומות ונביא תחליף תחתיך׃

You anointed the bearer of retributions; a prophet
to succeed in your stead.

Ben Sira appears to be alluding here to 1 Kgs 19:15-16, when YHWH commands Elijah to go back the way he came and anoint Hazael as king of Aram, Jehu as king of Israel and Elisha as his own prophetic successor. The Hebrew root מלא, meaning "to be full, fill," is translated by Skehan and DiLella as "bearer."[13] In other words, they regard both v. 8a and v. 8b as referring to Elisha. Skehan and

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[12] R. Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach erklärt* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1906) 460.

[13] Skehan/DiLella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 529.

DiLella are in the minority view on this because they hold to the more difficult reading. The Greek and Syriac versions both have the word "kings" here, which would be מלכי in Hebrew. The "kings of retributions" (מלכי תשלומות), then, would be none other than Hazael and Jehu, both of whom played a significant part in bringing the Omride dynasty to its final demise and in punishing the Israelite people (cf. 2 Kgs 8:12, 28-29; 9:14-37; 10:1-28; 13:1-25).[14] However, the Greek and Syriac exhibit a pretty confused text in v. 8b. Both versions read "prophets as successors after him" (καὶ προφήτας διαδόχους μετ' αὐτόν). Elijah did not anoint more than one prophetic successor so the use of the plural here is problematic, as is the third person pronoun. Furthermore, Elijah did not actually anoint Hazael and Jehu as kings, even though he was commanded to do so. The scriptures never mention an anointing for Hazael at all (cf. 2 Kgs 8:7-15), and we are told that Jehu was anointed as king by one of Elisha's disciples (cf. 2 Kgs 9:1-10). Emending the text to read מלכי ("kings") instead of מלא ("bearer") does not alleviate any difficulties, it merely compounds them. It should be noted, too, that the biblical texts do not say that Elijah anointed Elisha either. Although Elisha did receive a double portion of Elijah's spirit just before the latter ascended into heaven (2 Kgs 2:9-15).

On the heels of the investiture of Elisha comes an allusion to Elijah's ascension (v. 9):

הנלקח בסערה מעלה ובגדודי אש ....:

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[14] On this emended reading, see N. Peters, *Das Buch Jesus Sirach oder Ecclesiasticus* (Münster, 1913) 411; M. Z. Segal, ספר בן סירא השלם (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1972) 331; and Hildesheim, *Bis daß ein Prophet aufstand wie Feuer*, 68.

> You were taken in a whirlwind upward, by fiery troops [heavenward].

The final word of this verse is missing in MS B due to the severe damage to the second colon portion of the text that extends from v. 9 b through v. 12b.[15] The Greek gives no equivalent expression here. Instead, the word "heavenward" is supplied from the Syriac (לשמיא). The event to which Sirach is referring is narrated in 2 Kgs 2:1-12, where the words לקח, עלה and סערה are all used to describe the prophet's ascension. The expression בגדודי אש in the second colon of Sir 48:9 stands in synonymous parallelism with בסערה in the first colon. It must be remembered that in the Hebrew scriptures, God is often said to appear in the סערה, or stormwind (cf. Nah 1:3; Zech 9:14; Ezek 1:4; Ps 18:11; 50:3). The גדודי אש, or "fiery troops," which are mentioned by Sirach in place of the chariots and horses of fire of 2 Kgs 2:11, are also found in the book of Job in 19:12 and 25:3, though without the accompaniment of the word אש. The term is a military one that is used both here in Sir 48:9 and in the book of Job to denote the heavenly troops in the deity's entourage. Ben Sira's grandson, however, sticks to the more traditional wording of the biblical text – ἐν ἅρματι ἵππων πυρίνων ("in a chariot with horses of fire").

Just as the prophet appeared "like fire" in Sir 48:1, so he disappeared amidst fire in Sir 48:9. Throughout his praise of the past Elijah, Ben Sira alludes to numerous biblical passages dealing with the life of the prophet from the book of Kings (and perhaps even Chronicles). The sage emphasizes the awesome

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[15] There is no doubt that there was something written after the word אש in MS B. The facsimile clearly shows, after the gap, the foot of the last letter followed by the standard verse-ending colon; *Facsimiles of the Fragments Hitherto Recovered of the Book of Ecclesiasticus in Hebrew* (London: Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press, 1901).

power of the prophet's words and actions. He is depicted as a true prophet and spokesman for YHWH. His words are God's words and the miracles that he performs are done in accordance with God's will. The oracles he pronounces are fulfilled. He is zealous for YHWH and demands obedience to him and to his covenant. Essentially Ben Sira has given us a summary sketch of who the past Elijah was. He only bothers to hit the highlights of the prophet's career – a prophet whose glory can never be equaled.

Sirach 48:10-11: The Return of Elijah and His Future Role

Verses 10-11 are riddled with problems for the interpreter. The first problem is the poor condition of the Hebrew MS B at precisely this point in the text. As previously mentioned, the second-colon portion of the Hebrew text for 48:9-11 (and pretty much all of v. 12) has been eaten through. Thus the interpreter must rely to some extent on the Greek (and Syriac) versions. This creates another problem, for we have already seen that the grandson's translation was by no means a slavishly literal one. Restoring the missing Hebrew text on the basis of what the Greek text has to say may not be wise. Yet in some instances the Greek text can be shown to preserve the original reading, as was the case with Sir 48:1. New things are being attributed to or associated with Elijah's return to earth in these two verses, things that have been regarded as out of place in Ben Sira's thought-world. Our main purpose will be to determine where these innovations came from and why they were associated with the coming of the eschatological

prophet. This brings us to yet another problem: Were these verses penned by the sage himself or were they inserted into the text at some later date? Before we can answer this last question we must first determine, as best we can, what words were written in vv. 10-11 and what those words were intended to signify.

The following is what can be seen quite clearly of v. 10 in MS B:

הכחוב נכון לעת להשׁביח אף לפנ...
להשׁיב לב אבות על בנים ולהכין שׁ ..... לי

Before turning immediately to the Greek or Syriac translations, a number of observations about the Hebrew text as it stands may be made:

1) the verse begins with an articulated participle just like the five preceding verses;

2) the entire verse refers to the *eschaton*, that is, to the "appointed time" (לעת);

3) the verse describes three tasks that the eschatological Elijah will perform, each one being introduced by an infinitival form; and

4) the verse contains a partial citation of Mal 3:24.

Many modern commentators of the text translate the passive participle that begins v. 10 as "it is written," meaning that what follows is a citation from scripture. However, in this case the participle beginning v. 10 is like those that began vv. 5-9, all of which referred to Elijah. What we have here is part of the continuing description of the prophet and not an introductory formula for a citation.[16] The Qal passive of the root כתב may have the meaning "appoint,

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[16] I am in agreement with P. C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tanach* (Nieuwegein: printed privately, 1981) 39-40, and B. Wright, *No Small Difference: Sirach's Relationship to Its Hebrew Parent Text* (SBLSCS 26; Atlanta: Scholars, 1989) 210.

enroll, prescribe" (cf. Jer 22:30; Isa 4:3; Dan 12:1).[17] So continuing the second-person, direct discourse from 48:4 (just as we did in vv. 5-9) the beginning of v. 10 should be translated something like "you are destined ready for the appointed time."

Since the prophecy in Mal 3:23-24 promises the return of Elijah before the day of YHWH comes, common sense warrants that the end of the first line of v. 10 must make reference in some fashion to that fateful day. We also know from the appendix to Malachi that Elijah's coming and his "bringing back the heart of fathers to sons" and vice versa will effectively stop YHWH from smiting the entire land with a curse of utter destruction. In other words, Elijah is to act as an intercessor and appease God's anger, thereby saving the Israelite people from his wrath. This is precisely the future scenario that Ben Sira calls to mind for his readers in v. 10. The "anger" (אף) that Elijah is "to put an end to" (להשׁביח) must belong to YHWH. Turning to the Greek, the first bicolon reads as follows:

> ὁ καταγραφεὶς ἐν ἐλεγμοῖς εἰς καιρούς
> κοπάσαι ὀργὴν πρὸ θυμοῦ
>
> You are destined with reproaches for the appointed times
> to calm anger before the wrath.

There are several differences to note. Within the first stich, the Greek speaks of "appointed times" (καιρούς) in the plural and also of "reproaches" (ἐλεγμοῖς), whereas the Hebrew text attests to *the* appointed time and has Elijah "ready" or "prepared" (נכון) for the occasion, but not with reproaches. However, most scholars believe that the word for "reproaches," ἐλεγμοῖς,

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[17] Wright, *No Small Difference*, 302-3.

represents a corrupted form of an orignal ἕτοιμος ("ready, prepared"), whose meaning would coincide with the Hebrew נכון.[18] The rest of the Greek text appears to be an accurate translation of what remains of the Hebrew, that is, to put an end to anger before the time of God's wrath. The word θυμός, "wrath," is used to translate the Hebrew word חרון in Sir 45:19 and also frequently in the LXX. In fact, the phrase θυμὸς (τῆς) ὀργῆς is often used to render the Hebraic expression חרון אף throughout the LXX (cf. Num 32:14; Deut 13:17; Josh 7:26; 1 Kgs 28:18; 2 Chr 30:8, etc.). The expression, חרון אף, indicates "blazing anger" or "fierceness of anger" and is used exclusively in the Hebrew scriptures to describe God's anger. Especially noteworthy are three passages in the biblical texts that speak specifically of the Day of YHWH as "the day of his wrath" (יום חרון אפו; cf. Lam 1:12; 2:1) or "the day of YHWH's anger" (יום אף־יהוה; cf. Zeph 2:2, 3). Thus Smend and Segal reconstruct the Hebrew to accord more or less with the Greek text: [אל] להשׁביח אף לפני חרון, "to put an end to anger before (the time of) the wrath (of God)."[19]

Other scholars, however, have preferred to follow the wording of the Syriac translation for their restoration of the Hebrew text of the first half of v. 10. The Syriac version reads as follows:

והו עתיד למאתא קדם דנאתא יומה דמריא

And he is ready to come, before the day of the Lord will come.

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[18] See Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach*, 460-61.

[19] Smend claims that a ל is visible at the end of this first line of text, though the facsimile shows no possibility for that; *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach*, 461. Segal proposes the word חרון by itself; ספר בן סירא השׁלם, 330.

Thus the reconstructed Hebrew text would read לפני בא יום יהי, "before the day of the Lord comes."[20] The advantage to this proposal is that it coincides exactly with the wording of the prophecy in Mal 3:23, and naturally, this reading is preferred among those scholars who also understand the participle הכתוב as an introductory formula for a citation. But according to the facsimile of MS B, this proposal would be much too long for the lacuna.

Moving on the second line of v. 10, we come to the partial citation of Mal 3:24 – to cause the heart of fathers to turn to sons. Just like the LXX translator Ben Sira only cites the first part of the equation, omitting the 'turning of the sons' hearts to their fathers.' It is interesting to note that the Greek text both mimics and departs from the LXX translation of Mal 3:24. The Greek reads: ἐπιστρέψαι καρδίαν πατρὸς πρὸς υἱὸν. The singular "father" and "son" is used, as was the case in the LXX, but the verb ἐπιστρέφω appears here instead of the expected ἀποκαθίστημι. As mentioned in the previous chapter of this study, ἐπιστρέφω is the verb used throughout the LXX (and NT) to indicate the act of making one repent of their sins and turn back to God. While the Greek text of Sir 48:10 may be a departure from the LXX translator's rendition of Mal 3:24, it coincides nicely with the sense of the Hebrew prophecy and Elijah's mission to bring the people back to YHWH and to restore the covenant relationship. It would seem that Ben Sira, too, understood Mal 3:24 to be about covenant renewal if we take into account the last part of v. 10.

Ben Sira adds one further task to the future Elijah's repertoire: to "establish/restore/make ready" (להכין) something or someone. According to

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[20] See I. Lévi, *The Hebrew Text of the Book of Ecclesiasticus* (Leiden: Brill, 1904) 67; F. Vattioni, *Ecclesiastico* (Naples, 1968) 263; and Skehan/DiLella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 530.

the Greek and Syriac witnesses, that something is "the tribes of Jacob" (φυλὰς Ἰακώβ). In Hebrew MS B there is a portion of the letter שׁ that is still visible just before the lacuna, and just after it the upward stroke of the letter ל. So it would seem that the Hebrew text must have read שִׁבטי ישׂראל, "tribes of Israel," rather than "tribes of Jacob." It has long been recognized that the phrase להביין שִׁבטי ישׂראל / καταστῆσαι φυλὰς Ἰακώβ is an allusion to Isa 49:6 – a passage that describes the task of the Deutero-Isaian servant now that the time of Israel's redemption is at hand. Isaiah 49:1-6 is the second of the so-called "servant songs" in Deutero-Isaiah. In this song the servant narrates his divine commission to lead the people on a new exodus-conquest. The servant's commission shares a number of affinities with the commissions to Moses and to Jeremiah. For one thing, the servant was called by YHWH while still in his mother's womb, just like Jeremiah (Isa 49:1; cf. Jer 1:5). Secondly, YHWH made the servant's mouth "like a sharp sword." Perhaps this indicates a difficulty with speech, just like Moses who complained of being "heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue" and like Jeremiah who complained of not knowing how to speak because he was still a boy (Isa 49:2; cf. Exod 4:10; Jer 1:6). Thirdly, the servant expresses resistance to the call which must somehow be overcome by the deity (Isa 49:4; cf. Exod 4:10-17; Jer 1:6-9). Thus the servant is characterized in the guise of a prophet and the servant-prophet's task is "to bring back Jacob to him [YHWH], that Israel may be restored to him" (Isa 49:5). Essentially this means that he is "to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel": להקים את־שִׁבטי יעקב ונצירי ישׂראל להשיב (Isa 49:6). What Deutero-Isaiah is proclaiming here is a new exodus/conquest, the return of all the exiled Israelites to the land and the full restoration of Israel to its former glory. This

also involves a return to God and a restoration of the covenant relationship. The language of election is strong in Isa 49. Verses 8-13 specify the task of the servant-prophet. Just as Moses led the people to Canaan and apportioned the land (v. 8), so the servant will bring forth the people from bondage and will lead them through the desert, now tamed by YHWH, to Zion (vv. 9-11).

Ben Sira's allusion to Isa 49:6 in the context of the eschatological Elijah's mission is provocative and raises the question whether he intended to identify the end-time prophet with Deutero-Isaiah's servant. Let us look once again at Sir 48:10 along with Isa 49:6:

הכתוב נכון לעת להשׁביח אף לפנ[י חרון]
להשׁיב לב אבות על בנים ולהכין שׁ[בטי ישׂרא]ל׃

You are destined ready for the appointed time, to put an end to anger before (the time of) wrath, to cause the heart of fathers to turn to sons, and to restore the tribes of Israel.

ויאמר
נקל מהיותך לי עבד
להקים את־שׁבטי יעקב
ונצירי ישׂראל להשׁיב
ונתתיך לאור גוים
להיות ישׁועתי עד־קצה הארץ׃

And he [YHWH] said: "it is too little that you should be my servant; to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel: I will also make you a light of nations, that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth."

Ben Sira does not give an exact citation of Isa 49:6b, at least in comparison with the Massoretic text. However, the great Isaiah Scroll from Qumran has the names "Jacob" and "Israel" flip-flopped in this Isaian verse. So it would seem that our sage had access to a similar reading of the text. Without a doubt, Ben Sira is making a conscious literary allusion to Isa 49:6, the only place in the entire

canon where the phrase שִׁבְטֵי יַעֲקֹב ("tribes of Jacob") occurs.[21] Of course, the book of Isaiah is not the only place in the Hebrew scriptures where the hope of gathering the exiles or of the restoration of the Israelite nation to its former glory is expressed. These are common themes in the writings of Israel's prophets (e.g., Mic 4:6-7; Jer 31:7-10; Ezek 37:21-22). Nevertheless, the Isaiah passage is the only one in which a prophetic figure performs this redemptive event. In all other cases, it is always YHWH who will act as Israel's redeemer and restore the people to the land that he promised them. The Deutero-Isaian servant-prophet is also modeled after Moses, who was the prophet that led the Israelites in their first exodus and who helped to establish them in the land. Because Elijah is the quintessential prophet "like Moses," it could be that Ben Sira considered him the most likely figure to lead the dispersed Israelites in their final exodus home. Part and parcel of this redemptive act is the return to God and to his covenant. God does not 'take back' his people without them also taking him back, as both Zechariah and Malachi declared: "Return to me and I will return to you" (Zech 1:3; Mal 3:7).

But Ben Sira is just the earliest source we have that assigns to the coming Elijah the task of the ingathering of the exiles. We come across this idea also in the Targum *Pseudo-Jonathan* (to Deut 30:4), where Elijah is said to perform this act along with the Davidic Messiah. In the first-century BCE document known as the *Psalms of Solomon*, the reconstitution of the tribes in the land is also a function of the Davidic Messiah (17:28). Thus Ben Sira may not have been the first to equate Elijah with the Isaian servant or to associate him with the redemptive task

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[21] Snaith, "Biblical Quotations in the Hebrew of Ecclesiasticus," 9.

of bringing in the exiles or restoring the twelve tribes. This expectation may already have become a part of the growing tradition about the eschatological Elijah by Ben Sira's day. We must also take into account the fact that Ben Sira was clearly not living in fervent expectation of the end-time. Eschatological concerns or hopes are conspicuously absent from almost the entire book.[22] Moreover, Ben Sira seems to have been relatively content with the way things were politically, if we take into consideration his lengthy praise of the High Priest Simon II (50:1-21) and his silence on current governmental matters generally.[23] Thus angst over the political problems of the day probably did not lead the sage to expand upon the future Elijah's role in any significant way. It is far more likely that Ben Sira already knew of this belief, and perhaps it was a popular view in the scribal circles with which he was associated.[24] What accounts for the apparent interest in the end-time in Sir 48:10 is the strong tradition already associated with the prophet Elijah. Ever since the appendix was added to Malachi and the prophecy of Elijah's return was proclaimed, future hopes and the imagination of many centered on Elijah. The connection between Elijah and the future salvation of the Jewish people is so tight that even someone

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[22] The one passage in Ben Sira that smacks of eschatological fervor is the prayer for deliverance in chapter 36. It is here, too, that the hope that God will gather all the "tribes of Jacob" finds expression once more (36:13). The prayer also calls for the crushing of hostile rulers and the subduing of the Gentile nations. But this prayer was most probably inserted into the book at the time of the Maccabean crisis. See Th. Middendorp, *Die Stellung Jesu Ben Siras zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus* (Leiden: Brill, 1973) 125-32, and Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*, 111.

[23] Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*, 111.

[24] Note that the *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* is a Palestinian Targum (also known as the Targum Yerushalmi) and that the provenance of the *Psalms of Solomon* is also Jerusalem.

like Ben Sira, who is not at all carried away by things eschatological, cannot help but to praise the prophet's end-time role in addition to his past wonders.

Moving on to consider Sir 48:11, the following is all that can be read of the verse in Hebrew:

יה: ....אשר ראך ומ

Thus it is necessary to consult the Greek and Syriac texts at this point:

μακάριοι οἱ ἰδόντες σε
καὶ οἱ ἐν ἀγαπήσει κεκοιμημένοι·
καὶ γὰρ ἡμεῖς ζωῇ ζησόμεθα.

Blessed are those who saw you
and those who have died with love;
for indeed we shall surely live.

טובוהי לדחזך ומית ברם לא מאת אלא מחא נחא:

Blessed is he who saw you and died,
however he is not dead, but vivifying he will cause life.

Based on the readings of the Greek and Syriac versions, it is probably correct to emend the first word of v. 11 in the Hebrew to read אשרי, "blessed," rather than the relative particle אשר, "who, which, that." Scholarly opinion appears to be unanimous in accepting this minor emendation since it is difficult to make any sense of the Hebrew verse as it stands. Besides, it is easy to understand how a scribal copyist could miss a *yodh* at the end of a word. It also appears that the first half of v. 11 ended with the word ומת. The upper and rightmost strokes of the letter ת still remain faintly visible in MS B and there does not seem to be any room in the manuscript for a word(s) to follow ומת. The Greek text has the

additional phrase ἐν ἀγαπήσει ("with/in love"), while the Syriac corresponds with what must have been the reading of the Hebrew in MS B.[25]

The difficulty in interpreting v. 11a lies in the ambiguity of the verbs in Hebrew. As they are written in MS B, ראך and מת may be understood to express either a complete or incomplete action or state. We might conceivably translate v. 11a in a number of different ways in English: "Blessed is he who saw/has seen you and died;" "Blessed is he who sees/will have seen you and dies." The question, then, is whether this verse is referring to someone who has already seen Elijah or has yet to see him. Considering that this macarism comes on the heels of v. 10, it probably makes the most sense to regard v. 11 as future-oriented as well.

The second colon of v. 11 is almost entirely eaten away in MS B. The missing 11b should have contained a reason of sorts for the paradoxical statement in 11a. All that really remains visible are most of the final two letters, which appear to be יה. It also looks like the fourth or fifth letter of the second colon is a ך, ן or ך because the tail of one of these final letters can still be seen. Since both the Greek and Syriac witnesses speak about living or reviving in v. 11b, it is reasonable to assume that the Hebrew original had something to say about this as well. The likelihood of this is supported by the fact that the final two letters of the verse are יה, which is probably from some form of the Hebrew

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[25] Skehan/DiLella argue that the phrase ἐν ἀγαπήσει was added by the "GII glossator" since 'love,' in the sense of the love of God for humans and of humans for God, was a favorite theme and term of this glossator; *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 531. The more common reading in the Greek manuscripts is κεκοσμημένοι ("those who were *adorned* with love"), although this must be seen as either a deliberate or an accidental modification of the original κεκοιμημένοι ("who have died").

verb חיה "to live, revive." Since both the Greek and Syriac texts repeat (for emphasis) the verb "to live" (Gr: ζῳῇ ζησόμεθα; Syr: מחא נחא), the Hebrew of MS B also probably contained the infinitive absolute of חיה followed by a finite form of the verb.

But *who* will "live" according to v. 11b? There would seem to be only two possibilities. Either v. 11b is talking about Elijah himself or about the individual from v. 11a who will see Elijah and die. Scholars have restored the Hebrew text in order to reflect one or the other reading. For example, both Smend and Lévi believe that the Hebrew original of v. 11b must have contained another macarism that made reference to Elijah's eternal life. Smend and Lévi propose the reading אשריך כי חיה תחיה for v. 11b: "blessed are you for you will surely live."[26] This reading might accord best with Ben Sira's traditional view on death; that is, when a person died they went to Sheol and lived a kind of shadowy existence there. But it does not accord well with the Greek or Syriac versions, neither of which switches to the second person in v.11b. Moreover, the strange statement in v. 11a is not addressed or clarified by this proposal.

Segal has proposed a reconstruction that is more along the lines of the Greek and Syriac versions because it takes v. 11b as an explication of v. 11a: כי אף הוא חיה יחיה, "for he also will surely live." In other words, the one who sees Elijah and dies is the one being resurrected or granted eternal life, just like Elijah. Segal also speculates that this afterlife will be granted only to the especially meritorious or just, for he acknowledges that Ben Sira did not believe

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[26] Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach*, 461; Lévi, *The Hebrew Text of the Book of Ecclesiasticus*, 67.

in a general resurrection of the dead. Rather, Ben Sira may have believed that Elijah would appear to certain righteous individuals before their death.[27]

Émile Puech has suggested a reading of v. 11b that seems to draw from both Smend's and Segal's proposals. Puech claims to be able to see the remains of two consecutive ח's in the second stich (although no one else seems to be able to see them) and proposes the following reading: כי חתן חיים ויחיה, "for you give life and he will live."[28] For Puech, Sir 48:11 is the earliest attestation of what becomes an important part of the eschatological Elijah's mission later on – that is, his resurrection of the dead (*m. Sota* 9.15). Just as Elijah had the power to raise the dead during his life, so also will he have that power at the time of his eschatological return. Puech claims that v. 11 attests to a belief in the resurrection of those righteous Israelites who were converted by the call of the prophet Elijah at the time of his return and who died after the coming of the Day of YHWH.[29] In other words, only those individuals who are alive at the time of Elijah's return and who respond to the prophet's call to repent (i.e., those whose "turn their hearts") will be resurrected. Puech emphasizes that this is clearly not a question of a general resurrection of *all* the righteous ones in the Hebrew text, such as we find in Dan 12:1-3. The Greek of v. 11, with its use of the plural and its introduction of the collective "we," implies the resurrection of *all* the just. But as Puech notes, the Hebrew text of Sir 48:11 is pre-Danielic and also pre-

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[27] Segal, ספר בן סריא השלם, 332.

[28] É. Puech, "Ben Sira 48:11 et la Résurrection," in H. W. Attridge, J. J. Collins and T. H. Tobin, eds., *Of Scribes and Scrolls. Studies on the Hebrew Bible, Intertestamental Judaism, and Christian Origins* (Lanham, MD: The College Theology Society University Press of America, 1990) 86-87.

[29] Puech, *La Croyance des Esséniens en la Vie Future*, 74-75.

Qumranien, whereas the Greek version is obviously later than these texts and has been influenced by the evolution of beliefs concerning resurrection and the after-life.[30]

Puech's proposal is an attractive one. I am particularly drawn to the way in which he has incorporated Elijah's task of calling the people back to God (cf. Mal 3:24) into his explication of v. 11. However, his attribution of this belief in resurrection to Sirach himself gives me pause, as nothing else in the book suggests it. As a matter of fact, it goes against everything else the sage seems to say about the finality of death elsewhere (Sir 14:11-19; 38:21-22; 41:4).[31] Puech does acknowledge Ben Sira's traditional view of death, but still claims that the sage anticipated a *limited* resurrection at the time of Elijah's return. Obviously the sage did not have a problem with accepting the idea of people being raised from the dead or escaping death entirely in exceptional instances, as in the case of Elijah and Elisha (Sir 48:5, 9, 13). So what's to say that Ben Sira didn't also see the return of Elijah in the end-time as another exceptional case? If Puech is correct, then Sir 48:11 would be one of the earliest attestations of the belief in resurrection. It is necessary at this point for us to consider what other ideas about resurrection were current in the first quarter of the second century BCE.

The language of resurrection may already be found in the Hebrew scriptures, particularly in the prophetic literature. The classic example is Ezek 37:1-14 and the prophet's vision of the valley full of dry bones. But here it is clearly stated that "these bones are the whole house of Israel" (37:11). Thus the

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[30] Puech, *La Croyance des Esséniens en la Vie Future*, 75, and "Ben Sira 48:11 et la Résurrection," 89.

[31] Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*, 96.

resurrection is metaphorical for the restoration of the Israelite nation. Another passage that seems to express the restoration of the nation in hyberbolic language is Isa 26:19: "your dead shall live, their corpses shall rise! O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a radiant dew and the earth will give birth to those long dead." Some scholars have understood this verse to be referring to actual resurrection.[32] But those who will rise are contrasted with another group: "The dead do not live; shades do not rise . . . because you have punished and destroyed them and wiped out all memory of them. But you have increased the nation, O Lord . . . you have enlarged the borders of the land" (26:14-15). As John Collins has stated in regards to this passage, "In view of the contrast between the dead who do not rise and the nation that is enlarged, it is likely that the resurrection is the resurrection of the people, as in Ezekiel."[33] Ancient Israel certainly knew about beliefs in immortality and in gods who have the power to revivify the dead from her neighbor s, as was discussed in Chapter One of this study. With the exception of the unique cases involving Elijah-Elisha (and the book of Daniel), we see the adoption of elements of these concepts in various passages in the Hebrew Bible only in a figurative manner.

The earliest Jewish writings that do express hope for an afterlife are the Enochic books. In the Book of the Watchers (*1 Enoch* 1-36), which dates to

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[32] G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (HTS 26; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972) 18; R. Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1960) 130-37; G. F. Hasel, "Resurrection in the Theology of Old Testament Apocalyptic," *ZAW* 92 (1980) 273-76; and Puech, *La Croyance des Esséniens en la Vie Future*, 66-73.

[33] J. J. Collins, "The Afterlife in Apocalyptic Literature," in A. J. Avery-Peck and J. Neusner, eds., *Judaism in Late Antiquity. Part Four: Death, Life-After-Death, Resurrection and the World-to-Come in the Judaisms of Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2000) 120.

around the third or early second century BCE, distinctions are drawn between the fate of the righteous and of sinners after death. In his guided tour to the ends of the earth, the angel Raphael shows Enoch the four places or compartments where the sprits or souls of the dead will be gathered and kept until the day of judgment:

> And in the manner in which the souls of the righteous are separated by this spring of water with light upon it. In like manner, the sinners are set apart when they die and are buried in the earth and judgment has not been executed upon them in their lifetime . . . And in this manner is a separation made for the souls of those who make suit and those who disclose concerning destruction, as they were killed in the days of the sinners. Such has been made for the souls of the people who are not righteous, but sinners and perfect criminals; they shall be together with other criminals who are like them, whose souls will not be killed on the day of judgment but will not rise from there (1 En 22:10-13).

But these chambers are only the waiting places. Enoch continues on his journey to a tall mountain whose summit resembles the throne of God. He is told that this is the place that God will sit when he descends to visit the earth for good (25:3). Beside this throne is a fragrant tree that is said to be for the righteous and the pious. It will be planted upon the holy place, by the house of the Lord. "Then they shall be glad and rejoice in gladness, and they shall enter into the holy place; its fragrance shall penetrate their bones, long life will they live on earth, such as your fathers lived in their days" (25:6). It is not said that the righteous will enjoy eternal life, only that they will experience a long life like their ancestors.

The Epistle of Enoch (*1 Enoch* 91-105) is a little later in date than the Book of the Watchers, but perhaps still pre-Maccabean. It begins with Enoch's description of the day of judgment to his children. The heathen will be thrown into the judgment of fire and perish in wrath and in the force of eternal

judgment, but "the righteous will arise from their sleep, and wisdom will rise and be given to them" (91:9-10). This passage suggests a bodily resurrection for the righteous.[34] However, later on in the Epistle we read the following:

> But you, souls of the righteous, fear not; and be hopeful, you souls that died in righteousness! Be not sad because your souls have gone down into Sheol in sorrow, and that your bodies did not fare well the earthly existence in accordance with your goodness . . . for many good things will be given to you – the offshoot of your labors. Your lot exceeds even that of the living. The spirits of those who have died in righteousness shall live and rejoice; their spirits shall not perish, and the memory of them will remain (102:4-5; 103:3-4).

Thus a resurrection of the body is not in view here. Although the author mentions the fact that the bodies of the righteous have been mistreated in life (102:5), he does not say that these bodies will be given new life. It is their spirits that will live and not perish. Similarly, it is the spirits of the sinners that will descend into Sheol to face judgment and great torment (103:7-8). At death, the spirits of the righteous descend into Sheol, but at the judgment they will leave Sheol and ascend to heaven along with the righteous who are still alive: "But now you will shine like the lights of heaven, and you shall be seen; and the gates of heaven will be opened for you . . . for you will have great joy like the angels of heaven . . . for you shall be associates of the host of heaven" (104:2-6).[35]

The exaltation of the righteous after death to join the host of heaven is also fundamental to the understanding of the resurrection in the book of Daniel.[36]

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[34] Collins, "The Afterlife in Apocalyptic Literature," 124.

[35] See Nickelsburg, *Resurrection*, 114-24.

[36] Collins, "The Afterlife in Apocalyptic Literature," 125-26.

Daniel 12:1-3 is the only undisputed reference to the actual resurrection of individuals in the Hebrew Bible. It does not predict a general or universal resurrection either, as Puech claims.[37] Rather, only the very good and the very bad will be raised. The passage reads as follows:

> At that time, the great prince, Michael, who stands beside the sons of your people will appear. It will be a time of trouble, the like of which has never been since the nation came into being. At that time, your people will be rescued, all who are found inscribed in the book. Many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to eternal life, others to reproaches, to everlasting abhorrence. The wise will shine like the splendor of the firmament, and those who lead the many to righteousness will be like the stars forever and ever.

At the time of judgment, Daniel is informed that the people will be delivered; however, not all of them will be delivered, only those "written in the book." The book in question is the book of life, and so the salvation that is envisaged here is reserved for the righteous alone.[38] Dan 12:2 speaks of two groups who awake in the grave/Sheol (i.e., "the dust of the earth") to contrasting destinies. One group, obviously the righteous, will awake to eternal life, while the other group, the wicked, will awake to eternal punishment. It is not clear what this resurrected life will be like. No information is provided that would tell us whether a resurrection of the body or of the spirit is envisaged. Nor do we know whether this resurrected life will be located on earth or somewhere else. The only details of the afterlife that are provided come in 12:3, where we are told that

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[37] Puech, *La Croyance des Esséniens en la Vie Future*, 75, 80-82. Puech understands the resurrection in Dan 12 to include all people, Jews as well as non-Jews, the good and the bad.

[38] See J. J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 391.

"the wise" (המשכלים) will shine like the stars.[39] In the context of Jewish apocalyptic literature, the stars are the host of heaven, or the angelic host.[40] Thus the fate of the wise in Daniel is the same as that of the righteous in the Epistle of Enoch: to become companions of the host of heaven.

This brief overview of ideas about resurrection and the afterlife in texts that date to the first quarter of the second century BCE or earlier shows that there was some variation in these beliefs. The 'predominant' view, if we can call it that, is that the righteous will enjoy an afterlife as a reward and it will be a life shared with the angels, while the wicked are condemned to eternal torment. Obviously the eschatological Elijah plays no role in the resurrection or judgment of the dead in either the Enochic books or Daniel. There is one other thing that these two texts have in common – they are both apocalypses, and they are the earliest Jewish apocalypses. It is significant that ideas about the afterlife first show up in these texts. As Collins states,

> Hope for a differentiated afterlife, where the good are rewarded and the wicked are punished, first appears in Jewish tradition in the apocalypses of Enoch and Daniel, and it is in this area that the apocalyptic literature makes its most significant contribution to the Jewish tradition.[41]

Hence, Puech may be right about the meaning of Sir 48:11, but he is most certainly incorrect about the authenticity of the verse. If the Hebrew of v. 11 did

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[39] The משכלים in the book of Daniel are the heroes who stood firm in the time of the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes (cf. Dan 11:32-35). They "made the many understand" and some were killed as well. Collins, *Daniel*, 385-86.

[40] Collins, "The Afterlife in Apocalyptic Literature," 126.

[41] Collins, "The Afterlife in Apocalyptic Literature," 119.

envisage some sort of resurrection of the righteous who were alive at the time of Elijah's return, then the passage cannot be attributed to Sirach. It must have been inserted into the text at a later date. The structure of the pericope also supports this claim, for vv. 5-10 clearly belong together stylistically, while v. 11 seems to stand on its own.[42]

Conclusion

We have seen some interesting things in Ben Sira's praise of Elijah in Sir 48:1-11. He begins by calling Elijah the "prophet like fire" and touting the awesome power of his words, likening them to a "flaming torch." In the literature of the period, fire is often symbolic of the Torah and the image of the "flaming torch" is used of sages, teachers and interpreters of the Law. Ben Sira ends his eulogy by referring to the prophet's return to earth before the day of YHWH comes and his mission to restore the covenant relationship between God and his people. Sirach, in fact, emphasizes this three times or by three different phrases in 48:10. First, he states that Elijah was appointed for the end-time "to calm" God's anger or wrath. Clearly this is an allusion to Mal 3:24 and the divine threat of utter destruction that will be carried out if Elijah is not successful in his mission.

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[42] Some scholars have argued that both verses 10 and 11 must be secondary because they do not cohere with Ben Sira's lack of eschatological interest (cf. Middendorp, *Die Stellung Jesu Ben Siras zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus*, 134; and Mack, *Wisdom and the Hebrew Epic*, 200). Such an argument is unconvincing, at least as far as v. 10 is concerned. While it is true that Sirach shows little interest in eschatology, he is only affirming in v. 10 what he found in the older scriptures. Plus there is no implication of imminent expectation of the end here. See Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*, 104.

Throughout the Hebrew scriptures, the major cause of divine anger is Israel's failure to abide by the terms of the covenant. Secondly, the sage gives a partial citation of Mal 3:24, that Elijah is "to cause the heart of fathers to turn to sons." This, too, as we saw in the previous chapter has to do with making the people repent and bringing them back to God and to his covenant dictates. Thirdly, Ben Sira adds something new to the mix: Elijah will "restore the tribes of Israel." This is an allusion to Isa 49:6 and the redemptive task that Deutero-Isaiah's servant is to perform. The servant, who is modeled after Moses, is to restore the tribes of Israel to their land and to lead all the exiled Israelites in a new exodus/conquest to Zion. This act of salvation also requires that the people return to God so that he may return to them. Thus Elijah will not only restore the exiles to their land but also restore them to their covenant relationship with YHWH.

Finally, Sir 48:11 is a difficult verse to interpret. All but the first two words of the verse are missing in the Hebrew manuscript. To judge by the Greek and Syriac versions, the Hebrew text expressed the hope in an afterlife for those who will see Elijah at the time of his return. Puech has made a plausible case for understanding this verse to mean that only those righteous individuals who respond to Elijah's call to repent will be assured of an afterlife. However, v. 11 must be considered a later addition to the text. Ideas about actual resurrection and the afterlife first enter into Jewish thought with the rise of apocalypticism toward the end of the third and the beginning of the second centuries BCE. Since Sirach was no apocalypticist nor was he concerned at all with the world to come, this verse cannot be attributed to him. The eschatological Elijah is regarded as the agent of the resurrection in several rabbinic texts. But this idea may also

have been present at Qumran and it is to the literature associated with that sect that we now turn.

CHAPTER 4

Elijah in the Dead Sea Scrolls

It is abundantly clear from the documents discovered at Qumran that the Jewish community that wrote, copied, and collected these writings held a very different view of their present and future worlds than any known biblical author or group that preceded them. Sectarian beliefs about the end-time are what concern us in this chapter, particularly messianic ones. That the Dead Sea community expected the arrival of multiple messianic figures is by now a well-known phenomenon. The two most prominent messianic figures in the Scrolls are, of course, the royal or Davidic, and the priestly or Aaronid messiahs. The Scrolls also speak of a prophetic messiah or a future prophet who will act as an agent of God in the end-time. In several passages in the Scrolls, prophets are referred to as "anointed ones," thereby justifying our use of the term "messiah" in describing the eschatological prophet at Qumran.[1] The prophetic messiah is more sketchily drawn in the Scrolls than either the royal or priestly ones, but a number of texts do indeed indicate the hope for such a figure and point to the kind of role that the future prophet is to play in the end-time.

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[1] Prophets are called "anointed ones" in CD 2:12; 6:1 and 1QM 11:7. On this definition of a "messiah," see J. J. Collins, "'He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See': Messianic Authority in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 2(1995) 146.

Naturally, the question that confronts us is how does Elijah fit into this scenario? And it seems that he must have fit somehow into the sect's ideas about the end-time because, although it is quite an obvious point to make, the sectarians did not reject the book of Malachi as a non-authoritative text in any way. Multiple copies of the Minor Prophets were found in Cave 4 with two of those copies containing portions of Malachi, including the prophecy of Elijah's return in Mal 3:23-24 (cf. 4QXII[a] iv 16-20). There was also one text found at Qumran that explicitly refers to the future arrival of Elijah (4Q558), however, the text is quite fragmentary and it is not at all clear that it is sectarian in origin. Still, the presence of the text among the Dead Sea Scrolls is an indication that the Qumran community read it and presumably agreed with its contents or rhetoric.[2] Taking the issue one step further, is the eschatological Elijah to be identified with the unnamed future prophet or prophetic messiah of whom the Scrolls occasionally speak? Or might the sectarians have looked toward the arrival of more than one eschatological prophet? In an attempt to answer these questions, we will closely examine those scrolls that have been linked by scholars to the expectation of the new Elijah. We will start with the texts and passages that have seemed to scholars most likely to be about Elijah and then proceed to those texts where the association with Elijah is perhaps less certain. Our concern throughout will be the elucidation of the role of Elijah in the end-time and how it relates to what we have already witnessed about the prophet in the books of Malachi and Ben Sira.

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[2] On this issue of sectarian vs. non-sectarian literature, see C. A. Newsom, "'Sectually Explicit' Literature from Qumran," in W. H. Propp, B. Halpern and D. N. Freedman, eds., *The Hebrew Bible and Its Interpreters* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990) 167-87.

4Q558

Elijah is mentioned by name only once in the Dead Sea Scrolls, in the Aramaic papyrus fragment 4Q558 (= 4QVision[b] ar). The papyrus comprises 146 small fragments, the order of which remains uncertain, and has been dated to the second half of the first century BCE on the basis of handwriting analysis.[3] The fragment that mentions Elijah reads as follows, according to the transcription by Klaus Beyer[4]:

1 [. . .] באישין [. . .]
2 [. . .] הן די מ[. . .]
3 תמיניא לבחיר והא אנ[ה . . .]
4 לכן אשלח לאליה קד[ם . . .]
5 תו[ס]ף {o} ברקא וזי[קיא . . .]
6 [. . .] ואס [. . .]
7 [. . .] עוד [. . .]

1 [. . .] evil [. . .]
2 [. . .] their, who [. . .]
3 the eighth as an elected one. And behold, I [. . .]
4 to you I will send Elijah, befo[re . . .]
5 power, lightning and me[teors . . .]
6 [. . .] and . . . [. . .]
7 [. . .] again [. . .]

4Q558 was first interpreted in 1963 by Jean Starcky, who saw in the fourth line of the fragment an allusion to Mal 3:23.[5] Beyer adopted Starcky's addition of [ם]קד at the end of line 4, even though only the uppermost vertical stroke of the ק is visible. Markus Öhler also agreed with this restoration and pointed out in

[3] K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994) 93.

[4] Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte*, 93.

[5] J. Starcky, "Les Quatre Étapes du Messianisme à Qumrân," *Revue Biblique* 70 (1963) 498.

support of it the parallel of the Targum Jonathan, which translates Mal 3:23 in the following manner[6]:

האנא שלח לכון ית אליה נביא
קדם מיתי יומא דעתיד
למיתי מן קדם יוי רבא ודחילא:

> Behold, I am sending to you Elijah, the prophet,
> before the coming of the great and terrible day,
> which will come before YHWH.

Thus according to Öhler, it is clear that 4Q558 preserves an Aramaic citation of Mal 3:23. For Émile Puech not only is the allusion to Mal 3:23 apparent here but so is Malachi's description of the day of YHWH as a fiery conflagration (cf. Mal 3:2, 19-21). Even though the only clearly discernible word in line 5 is ברקא ("lightning"), Puech presumes the line to describe the final destruction of the earth by lightning and fire.[7]

Speculations about the context of this little fragment did not end with the awareness of the allusion to or citation of Mal 3:23. Starcky claimed with respect to 4Q558 that Elijah not only plays the role of the eschatological prophet but of the forerunner of the Messiah as well. He suggested that the preceding line of the text, which mentions "the eighth as an elected one," is a reference to David, the eighth son of Jesse who was chosen by YHWH as king (cf. 1 Sam 16:10-13; Ps 89:4). He proposed that the end of line 4 read something like [והי] קדם, "before him" – that is, YHWH will send Elijah before his Elected One, the royal Messiah.

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[6] M. Öhler, *Elia im Neuen Testament*, 17.

[7] É. Puech, *La Croyance des Esséniens en la Vie Future: Immortalité, Résurrection, Vie Éternelle?* (vol. 2; Paris: Gabalda, 1993) 677. Puech reconstructs line 5 as follows: *tz'p mn brq' ḥz[q'* "it (the earth) will be scorched by the intense lightning." Collins is wise to be more reticent by simply suggesting that the word "lightning" may be a sign of the day of the Lord; *The Scepter and the Star* (New York: Doubleday, 1995) 116.

Starcky proclaimed that what we have here is a prelude to the interpretation that we find in the New Testament of the conclusion to Malachi (cf. Matt 16:14; 18:10-13; Luke 1:17).[8] To further support his reading Starcky drew attention to Mal 3:1, where the messenger precedes "the Lord whom you seek and the angel of the covenant whom you desire." He surmised that the author of 4Q558 might have identified the angel of the covenant with the Elected One, the Davidic Messiah. Moreover, Starcky has argued that Qumran messianism developed in four distinct stages and that in the time period when 4Q558 was composed (ca. 50-25 BCE) the Essenes believed in only one Messiah, "the Messiah of Aaron and Israel," (cf. CD 19:10-11; 20:1; 12:23; 14:19) and his precursor, the eschatological Prophet.[9]

More will be said below about Starcky's theory of messianic development and about his identification of the eschatological Elijah with the 'Prophet' of the sectarian rulebooks. It is best at this point, however, to restrict our attention to his interpretation of 4Q558. While Starcky's proposal that the "elected one" in line 3 is a reference to David is plausible, it is quite a leap to assume from this a forerunner scenario involving Elijah. It is impossible to determine such a relationship on the basis of this fragmentary papyrus alone. The fact that the eschatological Elijah was *not* portrayed as a forerunner of the Messiah in any other text from the Second Temple period prior to the Gospel of Mark means that caution is in order before jumping to the conclusion that the predominant understanding of the future Elijah among the Evangelists is also present here in 4Q558. On account of the allusion to Mal 3:23 in line 4, it would be most natural

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[8] Starcky, "Les Quatres Étapes," 498. Puech essentially agrees with Starcky's interpretation; *La Croyance des Esséniens*, 678.

[9] Starcky calls this the "Pompeian stage," see pages 493-499 of "Les Quatres Étapes."

to assume that Elijah will be sent before the day of the Lord comes and not before the Messiah or 'elected one' comes.

More recently, Öhler has suggested a different interpretation of 4Q558. He has noted that another Aramaic text from Qumran (4Q545, or 4QVisions of Amram) mentions a seventh chosen one who is described as an eternal priest. The text reads[10]:

שביעי באנוש רעות[ה וי]קרה ויתאמ[ר . . .]
יתבחר לכהן עלמין

". . . a seventh among the men of [his] will [he is] called. And he will be named . . . he will be chosen as an eternal priest" (4Q545, frag. 2, lines 5-6).

It is uncertain who is meant in this fragment, but it may refer to Aaron who is named earlier in the text. This has led Öhler to conclude that in 4Q558 the eighth chosen one refers to the priestly successor of Aaron, Phinehas.[11] But Öhler does not believe that Elijah is portrayed here as the forerunner of Phinehas, especially since he is mentioned after the בחיר is named and, as the text is a "citation" of Mal 3:23, [ק]דם is more likely to refer to the day of the Lord.

Öhler's proposal is an interesting one and one which receives its impetus from the equation of Phinehas and Elijah that is found frequently in the Aramaic Targumim and in other rabbinic texts. Just how early these two figures were equated with each other has been a topic for debate. But even if the identification of Phinehas with Elijah can be shown to be quite early, it still

[10] Transcription is that of K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte*, 90.

[11] Öhler, *Elia im Neuen Testament*, 18.

remains doubtful that this is what we have in 4Q558.[12] Again, the fragmentary condition of the text makes for any identification of the "elected one" too hypothetical to be of much use.

All that one can say about Elijah from 4Q558 is what we already know about him from the final verses of the book of Malachi – that is, that Elijah will come in the end-time. It is quite clear that an eschatological context is in view in 4Q558 not only from the allusion to Mal 3:23 in line 4 of our fragment but also from the mention of "the time of the end" (בעדן קץ) in another fragment of the text. Possibly an apocalyptic context is in view since there is also talk of seeing visions and dreaming ("he saw," חזה; "I saw," חזית; "to dream," למחלמה), along with the mention of things like "the angels" (מלאכיא), "dominion" (שלטן), "his kingdom" (מלכוחה), "the wicked" (רשעא) and the "wise" (חכים).[13] What this fragmentary papyrus reveals is a belief in the expected return of Elijah before the day of YHWH comes, as it is presented in the book of Malachi. It is not certain whether 4Q558 is a product of the Dead Sea sect, nevertheless, the ideas expressed here are compatible with their worldview.

4Q521: "A Messianic Apocalypse"

The hope for the return of Elijah has been associated with another fragmentary text from Qumran, even though the prophet himself is not mentioned by name

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[12] See the article by Robert Hayward ["Phinehas – the same is Elijah: The Origins of a Rabbinic Tradition," *JJS* 29 (1978) 22-34] who argues that the equation of Phinehas with Elijah developed in circles friendly to John Hyrcanus and the Hasmonean priesthood.

[13] For the transcription of these other fragments from 4Q558, see Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte*, 93-94. J. Zimmermann is the one who suggests a possible apocalyptic context, *Messianische Texte aus Qumran* (WUNT 104; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998) 415.

anywhere in the document. The Hebrew text 4Q521 was dubbed by Émile Puech as "Une Apocalypse Messianique," although its contents and structure reveal a generic type more akin to the "eschatological Psalm" or hymn.[14] The text has been dated on paleographic grounds to the first quarter of the first century BCE.[15] It is comprised of 11 fragments and several smaller scraps. Of these pieces, fragment 2 II is the most substantial[16]:

1 כי הש[מים והארץ ישמעו למשיחו
2 וכל א[שר בם לוא יסוג ממצות קדושים
3 התאמצו מבקשי אדני בעבדתו
4 הלוא בזאת תמצאו את אדני כל המיחלים בלבם
5 כי אדני חסידים יבקר וצדיקים בשם יקרא
6 ועל ענוים רוחו תרחף ואמונים יחליף בכחו
7 כי יכבד את חסידים על כסא מלכות עד
8 מחיר אסורים פוקח עורים זוקף כפ[ופים]
9 ול[ע]לם אדבק [במ]יחלים ובחסדו י[שלם(?)]
10 ופר[י מעש]ה טוב לאיש לוא יתאחר
11 ונכ<ב>דות שלוא היו יעשה אדני כאשר ד[בר]
12 כי ירפא חללים ומתים יחיה ענוים יבשר
13 ו[דלי]ם ישב[יע] נתושים ינהל ורעבים יעשר

1 [for the hea]vens and the earth will obey his messiah,
2 [and all] that is in them shall not backslide from the commandments of holy ones.
3 Strengthen yourselves, you who seek the Lord, in his service!

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[14] See K. –W. Niebuhr, "4Q521,2 II – Ein eschatologischer Psalm," in Z. J. Kapera, ed., *Mogilany 1995. Papers on the Dead Sea Scrolls offered in memory of Aleksy Klawek* (Krakow: The Enigma Press, 1998) 151-168.

[15] É. Puech, "Une Apocalypse Messianique (4Q521)," *RevQ* 15 (1992) 477-480. Puech points out that the manuscript is obviously a copy because of the many scribal corrections in the text. Consequently, he would date the original sometime between 100-80 BCE.

[16] Transcription of the text is according to the *editio princeps* by Puech, "Une Apocalypse Messianique," 485.

4 Is it not in this that you will find the Lord, all who hope in their hearts?
5 For the Lord will seek out the pious and call the righteous by name,
6 and his spirit will hover over the poor and he will renew the faithful with his strength.
7 For he will honor the pious upon the throne of an eternal kingdom,
8 releasing captives, giving sight to the blind, and raising up those who are bo[wed down].
9 Forever I will cling to [those who] hope, and in his mercy he will [reward?] . . .
10 and the fru[it of a] good [deed] will not be delayed for anyone.
11 And the glorious things that have not taken place the Lord will do as he s[aid],
12 for he will heal the wounded, give life to the dead, and preach good news to the poor
13 and he will [sat]isfy the [weak] ones and lead those who have been cast out and enrich the hungry . . .

We are struck at the outset of this hymn with the most fascinating and controversial line of the text and must find ourselves asking – Just who is this anonymous "messiah" or "anointed one" that both heaven and earth will obey? The third-person pronominal suffix on the noun (משיחו, "his messiah") surely relates to God just as it does in lines 3, 6 and 9 that follow and serves to highlight the close relationship between the deity and *'his* anointed one.' The two realms heaven and earth, which together represent the totality of the cosmos, are personified here as they occasionally are in the Scriptures (cf. Isa 1:2; Deut 32:1). The phrase "all that is in them" – language drawn from Psalm 146:6 – obviously refers to the inhabitants of these two realms who will do two things, we are told: obey God's messiah and not turn away from the commandments of holy ones. Lines 1 and 2 of the hymn appear to share a parallel structure[17]:

[17] Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte aus Qumran*, 349.

heaven and earth	all that is in them
will obey	will not turn away from
his anointed	commandments of holy ones

This parallelism has raised a difficult question for scholars, and that is, does the parallelism of these lines require that we read the form משיחו as a plural ("his anointed ones") to coincide with the plural קדושים ("holy ones")? It is certainly possible that an orthographic משיחו may be read as a plural.[18] There are about thirty cases in the Scrolls where we do find simply ו- instead of יו- for the 3rd person pronominal suffix on a plural noun.[19] However, the plural form משיחיה ("her/its anointed ones") does appear later in fragment 8 of 4Q521, which might lead one to prefer the singular in line 1. Still the tenor and context of the passage must be taken into consideration.

The expression מצות קדושים is found neither in the Hebrew scriptures nor in other Qumran texts. But in the vast majority of cases, both in the scriptures and at Qumran, the קדושים or "holy ones" are angels.[20] Admittedly, the term is frequently applied adjectivally to human beings throughout the literature, but the substantival use of the word in the plural is very rarely employed to signify humans in the biblical writings or in the Scrolls.[21] Nevertheless, despite the overwhelming lack of evidence some scholars have interpreted the "holy ones" in line 2 as referring to human beings, either

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[18] Puech notes this possibility even though he himself opts for the singular; "Une Apocalypse Messianique," 486-87.

[19] E. Qimron states that "such instances of non-standard spelling for the 3rd person singular suffixes – with both singular and plural nouns – indicate that these suffixes were pronounced alike (ō or ū). The scribes, however, almost always succeeded in preserving the orthographic distinction;" *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (HSS 29; Atlanta: Scholars, 1986) 59.

[20] See J. Collins, *Daniel*, 313-17; C. A. Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (HSS 27; Atlanta: Scholars, 1985) 24-25; and Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte*, 349-50.

[21] The one (undisputed) exception in the scriptures is Ps 34:10, where the "holy ones" are the community of the faithful. Yet there is no undisputed case in the Qumran literature where the expression "holy ones" in itself refers to human beings.

prophets or priests.[22] Those who insist on the prophetic or priestly understanding of the קדושים also read the form משיחו as a plural and see the parallelism in lines 1 and 2 as necessarily synonymous. In this view then, the "anointed ones" and the "holy ones" are identical. As John Collins has argued, "there is no reason to assume that the parallelism in 4Q521 is synonymous. The two terms ['anointed one,' 'holy ones'] may refer to distinct agents through whom divine commands are transmitted."[23] Thus the parallelism merely suggests that the anointed one enjoys a status that is comparable to that of the angels.[24] In sum, lines 1 and 2 express the notion that all the inhabitants of the earth and the heavens will, in the end-time, be obedient to God's will, which will be conveyed by the deity's eschatological agents – his anointed one and the angels.

The psalm goes on in lines 3-4 to admonish the faithful community, the "seekers of the Lord," to strengthen themselves in their "service" of God (בעבדתו; lit., "in his service"). While the word עבדה has several nuances of meaning, the obvious relationship between lines 1-2 and line 3 and following indicates that the word here signifies one's worship of the Lord through the faithful observance of his commandments, or as Puech states, "le service 'religieux' de la Torah" (cf. Mal 3:14).[25] This (בזאת) is how one "finds" the Lord

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[22] For example, see M. Becker, "4Q521 und die Gesalbten," *RevQ* 18 (1997) 87-88, who understands the "holy ones" as a reference to prophets; and Niebuhr, "4Q521,2 II," 159, who takes the term as a reference to priests.

[23] J. J. Collins, "A Herald of Good Tidings: Isaiah 61:1-3 and its Actualization in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in C. A. Evans and S. Talmon, eds., *The Quest for Context and Meaning* (Leiden: Brill, 1997) 236.

[24] See Collins, "A Herald of Good Tidings," 237, who points to a close parallel to this idea that is found in the *Psalms of Solomon* 17:43: "his [i.e., the Davidic messiah] words are as the words of holy ones in the midst of sanctified peoples."

[25] Contra R. Bergmeier ["Beobachtungen zu 4Q521 2, II, 1-13," *ZDMG* 145 (1995) 39-48] who argues that lines 1-2 mark the end of one psalm and line 3 the beginning of another. But as J.

– a concept that is also expressed in the scriptures (e.g., Deut 4:29-30; Jer 29:13-14). These faithful ones, who are seeking the Lord through the fulfillment of the laws of his Torah, are further described in line 4 as "all those who hope in their heart" (כל המיחלים בלבם). This is a phrase which echoes Ps 31:25: "Be strong and strengthen your heart, all those who wait for the Lord" (חזקו ויאמץ כל־המיחלים ליהוה לבבכם). Undoubtedly, the hope here in line 4 of our text refers to a messianic-eschatological expectation.

The Lord (אדני) who was the grammatical object in lines 3-4 now becomes the grammatical subject in lines 5-8. The first thing that the deity will do in the end-time, we are told in line 5, is "consider the pious and call the righteous by name." This is the divine response, as Puech has remarked, to the effort of the faithful in their search for God and the expectation of his day, conveyed by the careful observance of the commandments.[26] The verb בקר, translated here as "consider," carries with it the sense of "care" or "watchfulness." We find the word being used in this way in Ezek 34:11-12, where God is depicted as a shepherd who will seek out any stray or scattered members of his flock in order to care for them. Thus, God will acknowledge and care for the pious or the just at the time of his visitation. As Zimmermann points out, it is not "all Israel" who will receive this special consideration, but only a part of them; that is, only those who are deemed righteous and divinely elected to be the true members of the eschatological community.[27]

Collins rightly criticizes, "this rather desperate proposal ignores the string of allusions to Psalm 146 in lines 1-9;" "A Herald of Good Tidings," 235 n. 38. Puech, "Une Apocalypse Messianique," 488.

[26] Puech, "Une Apocalypse Messianique," 488.

[27] Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte aus Qumran*, 354-55. The expression "call by name" (קרא בשם) is occasionally used to signify divine election, especially in Deutero-Isaiah; cf. Isa 41:4 +8; 42:1+6; 43:1+10; 45:4.

Line 6 repeats the sentiments expressed in line 5 while elaborating upon them, for the spirit of God "will hover upon the poor and he will renew the faithful with his strength." The spirit of God was also said to "hover" (רחף, pi.) over the waters in the first creation story in Gen 1:2. The use of that same image here within an eschatological context leads one to the idea of a new creation, particularly in relation to the second half of line 6, which explicitly mentions the eschatological renewal of God's people through his spirit or power. Having the spirit of God rest upon an individual or group is an act similar to divine election and so the notion of the special community of righteous persons who will be "called by name" in line 5 is being reiterated or reinforced. Apropos of line 6, God's spirit is also said to be "upon" (רוח על) three figures of note in the Hebrew scriptures, the first being the "stump of Jesse" or future Davidic ruler (cf. Isa 11:1-2), the second being YHWH's servant (cf. Isa 42:1), and the third being an anointed herald of good tidings (cf. Isa 61:1). It is the latter figure that demands closer scrutiny since this anointed herald about whom Trito-Isaiah wrote is commissioned by the Lord to preach good news to the poor (ענוים) and as line 6 of our text has it, the spirit of the Lord will hover upon the poor (ענוים). The "poor" in this context are equivalent to the pious or righteous ones, the true community of believers seeking the Lord's presence, spoken of in lines 3-5. As Puech explains, if the spirit of God comes to rest on the poor, then they truly are the "poor in spirit," the עני רוח who are mentioned elsewhere in the Scrolls (cf. 1QM 14:7; 1QH 6:3).[28] Moreover, the presence of the spirit of God in the heart of the members of the sect, the poor who have "the spirit of humility" (רוח ענוה; 1QS 3:8; 4:3), is a central point of their doctrine.

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[28] Puech, "Une Apocalypse Messianique," 489.

Lines 7-8 stand parallel to lines 5-6 and probably began with the conjunction כי. The Lord remains the subject and the חסידים, the object. Line 7 states that the Lord will honor or glorify (יכבד) the pious, that is, he will grant them a portion of his כבוד, his "light-emanating fiery substance."[29] This the deity will do – honor the pious – "upon the throne of an eternal kingdom" (על כסא מלכות עד). The phrase here must be taken as a description of God's kingship. In other words, God bestows his כבוד to the pious as the Enthroned One. The throne of God would be indicative of the locus of epiphany; for God, the kingly Lord of the earth, appears as the Enthroned One, whose "glory" or כבוד fills all the earth (Isa 6). God is king, ever since he conquered Chaos with his works of creation and his throne was established over the primal waters (Ps 29; 93). God's kingship is spoken of in many of the biblical Psalms (cf. Ps 47; 93-99) and especially in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* from Qumran. Moreover, God's kingship is frequently described as being eternal.[30]

What we have in line 8, then, would appear to be the signs for the eschatological inauguration of God's מלכות or "kingdom" – the freeing of captives, the restoration of sight to the blind, and the straightening out of those who are bent. As Puech has observed, line 8 is an almost literal citation of Psalm 146:7b-8, a text that has been alluded to throughout 4Q521 thus far.[31] Isaiah 61:1 also speaks of the liberation of prisoners (אסורים) in relation to the preaching of one having been anointed by God's spirit. The words of Trito-Isaiah (Isa 56-66),

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[29] Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte aus Qumran*, 358.

[30] E.g., Exod 15:18; Ps 29:10; 89:5, 30; 145:11, 13; 146:10; Dan 3:33; 4:31; 7:18, 27. See Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte aus Qumran*, 358-359.

[31] Puech, "Une Apocalypse Messianique," 490.

moreover, echo those of Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 40-55) and his description of YHWH's servant:

Isa 61:1	Isa 42:1, 7
The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up the wounded of heart, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners.	I have put my spirit upon him . . . to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and from the prison those who sit in darkness.

Since Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah prophesied in the wake of Cyrus' victory over Babylon, the liberation of captives of which both prophets spoke must be taken as a reference to the return of the exiles from Babylon and the restoration of the community in Judah. The restoration of sight to the blind in Isa 42:7 is simply a metaphor for the release of prisoners.[32] This is precisely how line 8 of our eschatological psalm begs to be understood, as a string of metaphors describing the redemption or deliverance of the righteous. Having already referred to this group of pious individuals as עניים, "poor/humble," it is understandable that the author would use metaphors such as "captives," "blind," and "bent/twisted" as self-designations. Lines 5-8 of the text express the hope in God's coming kingdom, when the Lord will glorify and redeem his pious community. But as Zimmermann has argued, the participial style of line 8 indicates that there is not an absolute antithesis between the present and future worlds; thus, the kingdom of God may be experienced in the here-and-now and may also be expected as coming up.[33]

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[32] J. Collins ("A Herald of Good Tidings," 228) citing S. Paul, "Deutero-Isaiah and Cuneiform Royal Inscriptions," in W. W. Hallo, ed., *Essays in Memory of E. A. Speiser* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1968) 182.

[33] Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte aus Qumran*, 360.

The inferior state of the text at lines 9-10 makes any interpretation of them quite difficult and speculative. Puech has reconstructed line 9 to read: אדבק במיחלים ולעלם, "and forever will I cling to those who hope." Yet, all that is visible of the third word in the line are the last three letters (לים . . .). The most perplexing issue here is the sudden appearance of a 1 sing. form (אדבק) – the presence of the *ʾalēp* not being in doubt. Puech explains the "I" as the pious 'reader' being invited to enter into or to renew his commitment to the community of the faithful, and that the author is counting himself among those who wait and hope for the Lord in their heart.[34] As attractive as Puech's proposal may seem, the poor condition of the text at this point demands this reader at least to abandon her hope of interpreting these lines. Even less of line 10 remains readable. Once again, Puech reconstructs more of the text than is really there. All that is discernible of line 10 is ש לוא יתאחר. . . . . ופר. So we know that "he/it will not be delayed," but that is about all we know. We might make the educated guess that it is the Lord's arrival that will not be delayed, although this would be just a presumption.

Line 11 underscores the preoccupation of this text with the apocalyptic onset of the kingdom of God, for the Lord will perform the "wondrous things that have not taken place" just as he said he would do. Line 11 clearly alludes to Ps 87:3, the only passage in the Hebrew scriptures where the form נכבדות occurs. Psalm 87 is a late Zion-hymn and verse 3 says that "wondrous things are spoken of you, O city of God" (נכבדות מדבר בך עיר האלהים). The following verses of the psalm go on to describe those "wondrous things," that the foreign nations will come to acknowledge God and that Zion will become the mother of

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[34] Puech, "Une Apocalypse Messianique," 490. Puech draws upon the work of S. Holm-Nielsen, "'Ich' in den Hodajoth und die Qumran Gemeinde," in H. Bardtke, ed., *Qumran Probleme*, (Berlin, 1963) 217-29.

all peoples (vv. 4-6). These are not the same נכבדות that are meant in 4Q521, although the Qumran text appears to follow the same structure as the biblical psalm because lines 12-13 of our text detail what those wondrous deeds of God are.

The end-time miracles that the Lord will perform include the healing of the sick, the resurrection of the dead, proclaiming good news to the poor, and enriching the hungry. The most controversial problem in the interpretation of this entire text, however, arises in line 12. As Collins puts it,

> Grammatically, God is the subject of the verbs in v. 12, but nowhere else is God the subject of the verb בשר ["to proclaim good news"] in the Hebrew Bible. The verb refers to the activity of a herald or messenger, and so it would scarcely make sense to speak of God performing it directly. Consequently, the suspicion arises that God is supposed to act through an agent here. Works performed through an agent would, of course, be nonetheless the works of God.[35]

Naturally, the agent through whom God will perform these eschatological wonders must be the "messiah whom heaven and earth will obey" mentioned in line 1 of our text. One must recall that an anointed figure is also said to preach good news to the poor in Isa 61:1. The speaker in chapter 61 of Isaiah, who tells of having been anointed by YHWH's spirit, is undoubtedly the prophet himself, Trito-Isaiah.[36] Thus, the post-exilic prophet saw himself as the divinely appointed herald who ran ahead to announce the good news of salvation to God's people and to proclaim liberty to the captives.

In addition to 4Q521, it seems that another text from Qumran also understood the role of the eschatological prophet in light of Isa 61. The text

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[35] Collins, "A Herald of Good Tidings," 234-35.

[36] See C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 366. As Collins notes, "the speaker [in Isa 61] is already identified as "the prophet" in the Targum, and this identification is also standard in the medieval Jewish commentators;" "A Herald of Good Tidings," 226-27.

known as 11QMelchizedek speaks of "this year of jubilee" (which in Qumran-speak means "the end of days") when the captives will be released (Isa 61:1; cf. 11QMelch ii 2-4). However, in 11QMelchizedek this 'liberation' is interpreted as the freedom from the debt of all one's iniquities, and it is a heavenly Melchizedek who will declare atonement for the captives' sins. But the text goes on to speak of this time as "the day of salvation," citing Isa 52:7: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the herald who announces peace . . . " The herald (מבשר) is then interpreted as "the anointed of the spirit" (משוח הרוח) whose task is "to comfort those who mourn, to watch over the mourners in Zion" (Isa 61:2-3; cf. 11QMelch ii15-19). Obviously, the phrase "the anointed of the spirit" comes from Isa 61:1 and the herald here must be understood as a prophetic precursor of Melchizedek who proclaims that the day of salvation has come.[37]

We are now a good deal closer to establishing the identity of the messiah in 4Q521. He is clearly a prophetic figure who will act as God's agent in the end-time, helping to usher in the kingdom of God by performing a number of miracles and by acting as a herald who will proclaim that the day of salvation is at hand. This prophetic messiah has mastery over both heaven and earth and enjoys a status comparable to that of the angels. We are also fortunate to have the upper portion of the very next column of the text of 4Q521, which, interestingly enough, contains an allusion to Mal 3:24. Fragment 2 iii1-2 reads as follows:

1 ואת חק חסדך(יך) ואחר אותם ב[. . .]
2 נכוֹן באים אבות על בנים [. . .]

[37] Collins, "A Herald of Good Tidings," 230.

1 and the precept of your mercy. And I will set them free with . . .
2 it is sure: "the fathers will return to the sons" . . .

The allusion in line 2 to the prophecy of Elijah's return to earth is unmistakable. This allusion, coupled with the fact that the text speaks about an eschatological prophet, makes for the identification of the anointed figure in 4Q521 as Elijah a most convincing probability.[38] Not only is Mal 3:24 being referenced in line 2 of our text, but the citation of the Malachi prophecy appears to begin with the word נכון. This is precisely how the citation of Mal 3:24 began in Ben Sira's praise of Elijah, as one must recall: "You are destined *ready for the appointed time* (נכון לעת), to put an end to anger before (the time of) wrath, to cause the heart of fathers to turn to sons, and to restore the tribes of Israel" (Sir 48:10). While the word in Sir 48:10 functions as an adjective and is best translated into English as "ready, prepared," the same word in 4Q521, functioning as a substantive, must be translated as "it is sure/determined/fixed."

The previous line of text contains that puzzling first-person speech; "I will set them free." The same verb, נתר, was also used in line 8 of column II, which is actually a citation of Ps 146:7. There in line 8 God was the subject of the sentence and the one who would liberate the captives. The first person suddenly appeared in line 9, where it was suggested that the speaker is the author of the text associating himself with the pious community of "those who hope in their heart." But that is not likely to be the case here in line 1 of column III, for it is scarcely conceivable that the author of the composition sees himself as the liberator. If the speaker who "will liberate them" is not the author, then it must

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[38] John Collins is the first scholar to argue for seeing the messiah of 4Q521 as Elijah or a prophet like Elijah, and he has written extensively about this text. In addition to "A Herald of Good Tidings," 236-37, consult *The Scepter and the Star*, 117-22; "The Works of the Messiah," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 1 (1994) 101-103; and "'He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See,'" 162-63.

be either God or his agent. The most plausible subject of the statement, "I will liberate them," is surely God:

> If we take God as the speaker of 4Q521 frag. 2 iii, then Elijah is the one predicted, not the one making the prediction. The passage concerns the return of Elijah, who will turn the hearts of children to their fathers, and by whose hand God will bring about the liberation.[39]

Émile Puech, on the other hand, does argue that the author of 4Q521 is the speaker in line 1; more specifically, that the author (perhaps the Teacher of Righteousness) is speaking through some kind of vision as the new Elijah or new Moses.[40] Since the messiah is designated throughout the text by the third person (in frag. 2 ii 1) and Elijah (in frag. 2 iii 1-2) by the first person, Puech reasons that the messiah and the new Elijah cannot be one and the same. Instead, Puech claims that the messiah of 4Q521 is the royal messiah whom the prophet Elijah announces.[41] He finds further evidence for his interpretation in frag. 2 iii 6, which he reconstructs to read: [. . .]יסמכו[ו ואת שבט, "and his scepter, and they will support/be sustained." The operative word here, of course, is שבט, which Puech takes as "scepter." However, this reconstruction is far from certain as it is unclear whether the second letter should be read as a ב or a מ, and only the tip of the third letter can be seen.[42] The word שבט, if we assume that Puech's restoration is correct, does not necessarily signify a "scepter."[43] It can also mean "tribe," and given the allusions to Elijah just several lines previous, one would

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[39] Collins, "The Works of the Messiah," 105.

[40] Puech, "Une Apocalypse Messianique," 497.

[41] Puech, "Une Apocalypse Messianique," 497.

[42] Collins, "The Works of the Messiah," 103.

[43] Collins, "The Works of the Messiah," 103.

rather expect the meaning of "tribe(s)," as in Sir 48:10, where Elijah is expected "to restore the tribes of Israel" (להכין שבטי ישראל). The final, and perhaps most obvious, reason to reject Puech's interpretation is that the eschatological Elijah is clearly *not* understood as the precursor or forerunner to the royal messiah in any of the literature from the Second Temple period which speaks of or alludes to his future role. This view of Elijah as messianic forerunner is attested in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark and no sooner.

There are plenty of reasons why the messiah of 4Q521 ought to be identified as the eschatological Elijah, besides the obvious allusion to Mal 3:24 in the text. For one thing, Elijah's command of the heavens was legendary during his earthly career. Even Ben Sira praised the prophet's ability to cause a drought by shutting up the heavens and to call down fire from heaven at will (Sir 48:3). It is not difficult, then, to see how heaven and earth could be said to obey such a prophet.[44] Furthermore, Elijah was best known for his performance of countless miracles, such as healing the sick, feeding the hungry and resurrecting the dead, the very same miracles which are to be performed in the end-time, according to lines 12-13 of our Qumran text. But it is particularly the latter, the resurrection of the dead, that is striking in 4Q521. The resurrection of the dead is absent in Isa 61 and in Ps 146, the two biblical passages that the author of 4Q521 incorporates the most into his composition. References to the raising of the dead are also poorly attested among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Yet, it appears in our text not only in line 12, but also in another fragment of 4Q521 (frag. 7, line 6), which refers to "the one who gives life to the dead of his people" (המחיה את מתי עמו). Surely the reference here is to God raising the dead just as it is in line 12.[45] But it is

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[44] Collins, "A Herald of Good Tidings," 235.

[45] Collins, "The Works of the Messiah," 101.

possible to conceive that God would use an agent in the resurrection. This may be the reason, then, why the raising of the dead is listed in line 12 as one of the eschatological wonders that the Lord is going to perform. If the "messiah whom heaven and earth will obey" is understood by the author and his community to be Elijah, then the additional task of raising the dead (added, that is, to the list of wondrous deeds from Isa 61) doesn't seem so out of place. Elijah, who was known to have given life to the dead in his past career, might presumably be thought to do so in his future one as well. Indeed, we have already seen the future Elijah associated with the resurrection of the dead in Sir 48:11, although it is not clear that he was thought to be the agent of the resurrection in that case. However, certain early rabbinic sources do assign the task of raising the dead to the eschatological Elijah (cf. *m. Sot.* 9.15; *j. Sheq.* 3:4).[46]

One could argue, however, that Elijah was never anointed in the scriptures. So how could he now be referred to as God's "anointed one?" Elijah is commanded to anoint Elisha as his prophetic successor, although the scriptures never actually report him doing so. Anointing here may already be metaphorical, and mean simply "appoint."[47] Trito-Isaiah spoke of being anointed by the Lord's spirit in Isa 61:1. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, prophets are referred to as "anointed ones" on several occasions (CD 2:12; 6:1; 1QM 11:7). Thus, it is not problematic to find the eschatological Elijah being called "his anointed one" in line 1 of our text. Also in line 1, the messiah is compared with the angels, enjoying the same status as "the holy ones." One must recall that Elijah did join the heavenly host after his famous chariot-ride. Moreover, Elijah

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[46] See the section on "Elijah as Miracle Worker" in Chapter 5 of this study for other references to Elijah's task of resurrecting the dead.

[47] Collins, "A Herald of Good Tidings," 227.

is YHWH's מלאך ("angel/messenger") who will prepare the way and announce the deity's imminent arrival; that is, he will "proclaim the good news" of salvation (4Q521 frag. 2 ii 12; cf. Mal 3:1, 23).

In summary, we know from 4Q558 that the community at Qumran must have believed in the expected return of Elijah to earth before the day of YHWH comes. On account of the severely fragmentary state of that text, little else may be said about the eschatological Elijah and his future role. Fortunately, 4Q521 gives us a fuller picture. Although the prophet Elijah is never mentioned by name in this text, we have argued that the "anointed one whom heaven and earth will obey" is best understood as Elijah. This interpretation makes the most sense of the portions of this document that have survived. That Elijah is present somewhere in this text is clear from the citation of Mal 3:24 in frag. 2 iii. The miracles that the "anointed one" is to perform in the end-time, acting as God's agent, point decisively to Elijah. He is to announce the good news of salvation to the pious community, heal the sick, enrich the hungry, and raise the dead to life. Each of these wondrous deeds Elijah was known for either in his past career or will be known for in his future one, according to the books of Kings, Malachi and Ben Sira. Moreover, none of these miracles are ones that are characteristically associated with a royal or priestly messiah in any literature of the period.[48] So what we find here in 4Q521 is a view of the eschatological Elijah that is vastly similar to those views expressed in Malachi and Ben Sira, yet expanded even more. That is, the prophet is seen as a special agent of the Lord, who has divine authority to act on God's behalf. He is understood to be a definitive figure for the end-time and not a forerunner or precursor of some other greater figure,

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[48] For a comparison of the roles of the royal, priestly and prophetic messiahs in the Dead Sea Scrolls, see the article by Collins, "'He Shall Not Judge by What His Eyes See,'" 145-64.

unless that figure is the deity himself. He will help to usher in the kingdom of God through the performance of wondrous deeds, whether that entails the restoration of the covenant relationship between God and his people, the ingathering of the exiles, the healing of the sick or the resurrection of the dead. The innovations in the Elijah tradition that we find in 4Q521 are twofold: Elijah's role in raising the dead, and the use of the title "messiah" or "anointed one" with respect to him.

Is Elijah the "Prophet" of the Community Rule (1QS 9:11)?

The eschatological Elijah has been found in the Qumran scrolls in a couple of other ways as well, particularly in the well-known passage from the *Community Rule* (1QS) about the expectation of a prophet and two messiahs, one priestly and the other kingly. In 1QS 9:9-11, the sectarians are instructed to not depart from the counsel of the law and to be ruled by the first judgments which the men of the community began to be taught "until the coming of a prophet and the messiahs of Aaron and Israel" (עד בוא נביא ומשיחי אהרון וישראל). In other words, the laws of the sect remain valid until the arrival of these three figures, when, presumably, a new set of laws will go into effect. The scholarly discussions about this passage are rife with controversy. First of all, another (and perhaps, earlier?) copy of the *Community Rule* does not even contain these lines (cf. 4QS^{e}).[49] Secondly, the *Damascus Document* (CD), the other major rulebook for the community, repeatedly makes mention of the future arrival of

[49] J. T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judea* (London: SCM, 1959) 123.

"the messiah of Aaron and Israel" (note: the singular substantive משיח; cf. CD 12:23-13:1; 14:19; 19:10-11; 20:1), with no mention whatsoever of "a prophet." More confusing still is the fact that there appears to be a parallel passage to 1QS 9:11 in CD 6:11, for we read in the latter passage that the ordinances of the "Interpreter of the Law" will remain in effect "until he comes who shall teach righteousness at the end of days" (עד עמד יורה הצדק באחרית הימים). But just how this future teacher of righteousness relates to the other three figures mentioned in the *Community Rule* is a matter for debate. The issue of the possible evolution of messianic thought at Qumran is an interesting one, to be sure, but also one that is beyond the scope of this study.[50] The simple fact that such a statement is made in 1QS 9:11, along with very clear indications in other Qumran documents of the belief in an eschatological prophet and dual messiahs, is enough for us to go on at present. The issue that concerns us here is the kind of messianic expectation that eventually arose at Qumran and whether or not we can identify any of the eschatological figures spoken of in the rulebooks as the future Elijah. The authoritative rulebooks are our best guides to the general beliefs of the sect, so a careful examination of the above-stated passages seems warranted. We shall first consider whether the "Prophet" is to be equated with the eschatological Elijah. In the following section of this chapter, we will turn to the issue of the proposed identification of the "messiah of Aaron" with Elijah.

It is widely accepted that the three expected figures from 1QS 9:11 – the prophet and the messiahs of Aaron and Israel – are referenced in the first three paragraphs of 4Q175 or 4QTestimonia, a document in which various scriptural

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[50] For theories of development, consult J. Starcky, "Les Quatres Étapes," 481-504; and G. J. Brooke, "The Messiah of Aaron in the Damascus Document," *Revue de Qumran* 15 (1991) 215-30. For a brief review of the various theories and critiques of them, see Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 77-83.

passages of eschatological significance are strung together.[51] Near the start of the text, Deut 18:18-19 is quoted: "I will raise up for them a prophet from among their brothers, like you, and I will put my words in his mouth and he will speak to them all that I command him . . ." We have already had occasion to discuss this biblical passage wherein YHWH promises to send to his people a prophet "like Moses" in Chapters 1 and 2 of this study. Originally, Deut 18:18 did not have an eschatological orientation, but referred to the regular succession, or perhaps rather the periodic appearance, of prophets as spokespersons for God and defenders of the people and their concern for observance of the Mosaic covenant. The text of 4Q175 continues with a citation of Balaam's Oracle about the star and the scepter from Num 24:15-17, which is most often interpreted with reference to the Davidic messiah, and a citation of the blessing of Levi from Deut 33:8-11, which is usually taken as a reference to the eschatological priest. Since it is clear that 4Q175 contains a collection of eschatological proof-texts, it would seem, then, that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the anticipated prophet of 1QS 9:11 and the prophet "like Moses" referenced in the *Testimonia*, and few, I think, would disagree on that point alone. However, some scholars have gone further and claimed that the prophet who is expected – the one who is like Moses – is none other than Elijah.

Puech, for example, argues as much on the basis of his view that the eschatological Elijah was popularly believed to precede the coming of the

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[51] See J. A. Fitzmyer, "'4QTestimonia' and the New Testament," in Fitzmyer, ed., *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1974) 82-89; and F. M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1961) 219-21. However, Fitzmyer (p. 84) is correct in emphasizing the fact that 4QTestimonia cannot be taken as exact allusions to the three expected figures of 1QS 9:11: "The real difficulty in the list is the reference of Num 24:15-17 to the kingly Messiah, since the same passage is referred to in CD 7:18-20 and interpreted of *two* figures, not one: the Star is understood to be the Interpreter of the Law (probably a priestly figure), and the Sceptre is the Prince of all the congregation (probably the Davidic Messiah)."

Davidic messiah in the Second Temple period. He cites numerous textual examples of this belief, though all are from either early Christian or rabbinic sources (e.g., Mk 9:11; Mt 17:10; *4Ezra* 6:26; Justin *Dial.* 8:4; 49:1), or from elsewhere in the Qumran scrolls (i.e., 4Q558; 4Q521).[52] He also seems to read Sir 48:10 in this same manner as well; that is, that the restoration of the tribes in v. 10 (an allusion to Isa 49:6) will be through the messianic Servant, or Davidic Messiah. In addition, Puech does not think it impossible that "the messenger/angel of the covenant" in Mal 3:1 is a veiled designation for the (Davidic) Messiah, who will sit for the judgment (Mal 3:2), and before whom "my messenger" (i.e., Elijah) will prepare the way.[53] However, Puech is putting the cart before the horse here. As the present study has made clear, there is absolutely no evidence from any Jewish source in the Second Temple period that shows that the prophet Elijah was ever understood as a precursor of the royal messiah. Puech is unequivocally reading later notions about Elijah's role back into the earlier material. Besides, there is no indication that the prophet of 1QS 9:11 is intended to precede the coming of the messiahs anyway. Rather the text only states that a prophet and the messiahs are expected to come. There is nothing in that passage of the *Community Rule*, or in the *Testimonia*, that suggests the order of appearance, or importance, of these three figures. Just because the Moses-like prophet is mentioned first in 1QS 9:11, or Deut 18:18 is accorded first place in the *Testimonia*, does not necessarily mean that the prophet's arrival will precede that of the messiahs.[54]

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[52] Puech, *La Croyance des Esséniens en la Vie Future*, 672-80. See also S. Talmon, "Between the Bible and the Mishna," in idem, *The World of Qumran from Within* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1989) 51; and idem, "Waiting for the Messiah," in *The World of Qumran from Within*, 292.

[53] Puech, *La Croyance des Esséniens en la Vie Future*, 672.

[54] N. Wieder makes such a claim; see "The 'Law-Interpreter' of the Sect," 168. It is true that in several other texts from Qumran, it seems that the royal messiah must defer to the

It is true that Elijah was portrayed as the quintessential prophet "like Moses," more so than any other figure in the biblical corpus, and it is clear from 4Q558 and 4Q521 that the Qumran community must have looked forward to the arrival of the prophet Elijah. But these two facts alone do not necessarily mean that the prophet like Moses who is mentioned along with the messiahs of Aaron and Israel in the *Community Rule* and in the *Testimonia* is to be equated with Elijah. For one thing, the information is far too sketchy in these texts to draw such an inference. Secondly, there is certainly no reason to think that there had to be only one future or eschatological prophet. For example, we saw that in 11QMelchizedek a prophetic precursor is expected to come and proclaim salvation and comfort the mourners of Zion before Melchizedek carries out his role as heavenly judge. There is nothing to suggest that this end-time prophetic herald is either Elijah or a prophet like Moses. Outside of the sectarian literature, the First Book of Maccabees speaks of maintaining Simon as their leader and high priest "until a trustworthy prophet should arise" (1 Macc 14:41; cf. also 4:46). Again, there is no indication that a specific prophet, such as Elijah, is being referenced here. So for us to take every mention of a future prophet in the Scrolls and simply equate it with Elijah would be to create a serious distortion of the evidence.

Shortly after the Scrolls' discovery, a number of scholars began to put forward the view that the expected prophet of 1QS 9:11 was the historical Teacher of Righteousness, who played a crucial role in the development of the

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authority of the priestly messiah (cf. 1QSa 2:11-22; 4QpIsa[a] frags. 8-10 iii 22-25; 11QTemple[a] 58:19). But nowhere in the Scrolls is there an indication that the royal messiah has any special authority or prominence over the eschatological prophet.

Dead Sea sect.[55] Undoubtedly, the Teacher can be viewed as a "Second Moses." It is said in Num 12:6-8 that God spoke to Moses "mouth to mouth," as a means of distinguishing Moses from all other prophets. So it is stated in the Scrolls that the Teacher's words came "from the mouth of God" and that to the Teacher God "has made known all the mysteries of the words of his servants the prophets" (cf. 4QpHab 2:2-3; 7:4-5). The sect also seems to have believed that the early history of Israel – the exodus from Egypt and the life in the desert – would be re-enacted just prior to the eschatological period. Their exodus from Judah was the counterpart to the exodus from Egypt. Hence, the community regarded itself as living in the "desert period" at Qumran. Just as Moses was the mediator of the covenant between God and the Israelites, so the historical Teacher was the instrument through whom a New Covenant was made between God and the members of the sect. Like the Moses of old, the Teacher probably functioned as the authoritative 'Interpreter of the Law' and exponent of the Torah for the sect.

The Teacher is never actually called a prophet anywhere in the Scrolls, even though he is portrayed as one in the Pesharim. Equating him with the Moses-like prophet of 1QS 9/*Testimonia* implies that the passages in question were written before the historical Teacher came on the scene.[56] This cannot be the case. We have already drawn attention to the strong similarity between 1QS 9:11 and CD 6:11. In the former passage, "the primitive precepts in which the men of the community were first instructed" are to remain in effect "*until* the coming of a prophet and the messiahs of Aaron and Israel." CD 6 speaks of the ordinances of the "Interpreter of the Law," which will remain in effect "*until* he

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[55] See N. Wieder, "The 'Law-Interpreter' of the Sect," 158-75; H. Teeple, *The Mosaic Eschatological Prophet*, 51-56; and A. S. van der Woude, *Die Messianischen Vorstellungen der Gemeinde von Qumran* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1957) 186.

[56] Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 113.

comes who shall teach righteousness at the end of days." If the historical Teacher is indeed the "Interpreter of the Law" who established the precepts that the people should follow "throughout the whole age of wickedness" (CD 6:10), then the Teacher should be associated with the "primitive precepts" rather than with the coming of the messiahs.[57] Thus the coming of a Moses-like prophet must still be viewed as a future expectation.

Might it be possible that the eschatological prophet and the one who will teach righteousness at the end of days are one and the same figure?[58] And is this future prophet/teacher to be identified with Elijah? For the language in CD 6:11 is clearly drawn from Hos 10:12, "until he comes and teaches righteousness for you." In later Jewish tradition, Hos 10:12 is explicitly applied to Elijah. Rashi does so in his commentary on the passage from *b. Bekhoroth* 24a, in which the Palestinian Rabbi Yohanan declared that a certain question of law must be left undecided for all time, or rather עד יבוא ויורה צדק, "until he comes and teaches righteousness." In Hos 10:12, YHWH is the subject of the verb יורה, from the end of the preceding clause. But R. Yohanan could not have meant that God will one day decide all unsettled questions of the law, since such a role is not ascribed to him anywhere else. Thus Rashi believed R. Yohanan to mean that Elijah will perform this duty. Furthermore, as Louis Ginzberg so readily points out, the eschatological Elijah appears in no fewer than eighteen passages in the

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[57] Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 113.

[58] It has been argued that this future teacher of righteousness will be the historical Teacher risen from the dead at the end of days. It is highly unlikely that the sectarians held such a view. For the resurrected Teacher interpretation, see J. M. Allegro, "Further Messianic References in Qumran Literature," *JBL* 75 (1956) 176-77; and W. D. Davies, *Torah in the Messianic Age and/or the Age to Come* (SBLMS 7; Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1952) 46-47. For a critique of that interpretation, consult M. Black, "Theological Conceptions in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 18-19 (1953/54) 86.

Talmud as one who will settle all doubts on matters relating to the law.[59] The biblical source of the prophet like Moses is Deut 18:18, which describes the authentic prophetic spokesperson for YHWH. So it is certainly possible to view this future prophetic figure as a teacher. But if the eschatological Mosaic prophet/teacher of righteousness is Elijah, then this is a whole new understanding of Elijah's role in the end-time that we have not seen previously anywhere in the literature. For Elijah was not portrayed as a teacher-figure in Malachi, Ben Sira, or in what has survived of 4Q558 and 4Q521. Of course, we cannot expect the various authors of the Scrolls all to have held uniform opinions on the matter of messianism. Still, it is difficult to accept the identification of Elijah as the eschatological teacher merely on the basis of what appears later in the tradition; and, as Teeple has emphasized, "the rabbinic thought concerning Elijah is not necessarily the same as that of our sect."[60]

Is Elijah the "Messiah of Aaron?"

As mentioned above, the *Testimonia* (4Q175) contains a collection of eschatological proof-texts that appear to match up with the three eschatological figures from 1QS 9:11. The blessing of Levi from Deut 33:8-11 is cited in the *Testimonia*, presumably, with reference to the "messiah of Aaron." Deut 33:10 says of the descendants of Levi: "They shall teach your laws to Jacob, and your instructions to Israel." The function of the priestly messiah, then, is to teach the

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[59] L. Ginzberg, *An Unknown Jewish Sect*, 212.

[60] Teeple, *The Mosaic Eschatological Prophet*, 55.

law in the end-time. In 4Q541 (4QAaron[a]), a fragmentary text concerning the eschatological high priest, it is said of the figure who "will atone for all the children of his generation" that "his word is like the word of the heavens, and his teaching, according to the will of God."[61] Thus the eschatological high priest or messiah of Aaron could aptly be described as an "Interpreter of the Law" or "Teacher of Righteousness." Just as in the *Testimonia*, Balaam's oracle (Num 24:15-17) is cited in CD 7:19 with eschatological import, although here it is interpreted of two figures rather than one. We read:

> And the star is the Interpreter of the Law who will come to Damascus, as it is written: 'A star rises from Jacob, a scepter comes forth from Israel.' The scepter is the Prince of the whole congregation and when he rises he will destroy all the sons of Seth (CD 7:18-21).

In other words, the Interpreter of the Law in this passage is the messiah of Aaron and the Prince of the Congregation is the messiah of Israel.[62] So it would seem more likely that the "one who will teach righteousness at the end of days" (CD 6:11) is to be identified with the priestly messiah rather than with the Moses-like prophet. This association is even more suitable if we take into account the absence of any reference to the future prophet elsewhere in the *Damascus Document*.

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[61] See É. Puech, "Fragments d'un apocryphe de Lévi et le personnage eschatologique, 4QTestLévi[c-d] (?) et 4QAJa," in J. Trebolle Barrera and L. Vegas Montaner, eds., *The Madrid Qumran Congress* (Leiden: Brill, 1992) 2.499-500; and J. J. Collins, "Asking for the Meaning of a Fragmentary Qumran Text: The Referential Background of 4QAaron," in T. Fornberg, D. Hellholm, eds., *Texts and Contexts: Biblical Texts in their Textual and Situational Contexts. Essays in Honor of Lars Hartman* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995) 579-90.

[62] We find this outside of the Scrolls as well. In the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the star of Balaam's oracle is also associated with the eschatological priest (cf. *T. Levi* 18), while the scepter is associated with the royal messiah (cf. *T. Judah* 24).

First, L. Ginzberg, and then later, A. S. van der Woude, put forward the view that the future teacher of righteousness/Interpreter of the Law (CD 6:11; 7:18, respectively) is to be identified with the messiah of Aaron, who is also to be associated with the returning Elijah.[63] Ginzberg argued his case entirely on the basis of Elijah's role in later Jewish tradition, and we should keep in mind that he only had access to the Zadokite fragments. Had he had the Dead Sea scrolls from which to work, he might have arrived at different conclusions. Nevertheless, since the teacher of righteousness in CD 6:11 will give new law, which is one of Elijah's functions in the rabbinic literature, Ginzberg reasoned that the two figures must be identical. In addition, Elijah was also identified as eschatological High Priest through an association with Phinehas, Aaron's grandson, and their shared motif of zeal. Many such passages may be found in the *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, wherein the future Elijah is specifically called כהנא רבא, "the high priest."[64]

The messianic priest was explicitly identified with the prophet Elijah not only in the literature of the Rabbis but also in the writings of the Karaites. Naphtali Wieder draws attention to the possible similarities between the messianic doctrines of the Qumran sect and those of the Karaite movement, the belief in the two messiahs being the most obvious resemblance.[65] Both van der Woude and Wieder make much of the reference to "Damascus" in CD 7:18-19, where it is said that the star/Interpreter of the Law "will come to Damascus."

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[63] Ginzberg, *An Unknown Jewish Sect*, 248, 254-55; van der Woude, *Die Messianischen Vorstellungen der Gemeinde von Qumran*, 55-61, 73-74.

[64] *Tg. Ps-J.* Exod 6:18; 40:10; Deut 30:4; 33:11. For other rabbinic texts that present the eschatological Elijah as a priest, see Ginzberg, *An Unknown Jewish Sect*, 242-48. See also the overview in the closing epilogue of this study.

[65] N. Wieder, "The Doctrine of the Two Messiahs among the Karaites," *JJS* 6 (1955) 14-23; and idem, *The Judean Scrolls and Karaism* (London: Horovitz Publishing Co; 1962).

Van der Woude takes the reference in CD 7:19 as an allusion to 1 Kgs 19:15, where Elijah is told "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram."[66] The land or region of Damascus, whatever exact territory it entails, was expected to become the scene of messianic events in Karaite and rabbinic circles. In fact, "it will be there," as Wieder explains, "that Elijah will make his long-expected appearance, assume the leadership of the exiles and guide them to the Holy Land."[67] One of the many examples that Wieder cites for this interpretation is the way in which the phrase "looks toward Damascus" (צופה פני דמשק) from the Song of Songs 7:5 was made to signify "Look out for Elijah!" (also on the basis of 1 Kgs 19:15) in tannaitic-amoraic sources. For instance, in *Sifre Deut* § 41, the phrase from Song 7:5 is commented upon as follows: "If you practice the Law, then look out for Elijah, to whom I said: 'Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus.'"[68] The primary idea underlying this interpretation is the belief that the region of Damascus would be the scene of Elijah's future appearance.

The past Elijah did priestly things, to be sure. He built an altar and offered sacrifices (1 Kgs 18:30-39), and he was commanded to anoint kings as well as his very own successor (1 Kgs 19:15-16). The future Elijah is indeed associated with Phinehas and identified as High Priest in many rabbinic sources. Yet, my criticism remains the same as above. It is not necessarily so that the rabbinic (or Karaite) understanding of the future Elijah is the same as that of the Qumran sect. Plus, the eschatological Elijah is not understood as a priestly figure in 4Q558 or 4Q521, although admittedly both are fragmentary documents and

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[66] Van der Woude, *Die Messianischen Vorstellungen der Gemeinde von Qumran*, 55.

[67] Wieder, *The Judean Scrolls and Karaism*, 7-8.

[68] See Wieder, *The Judean Scrolls and Karaism*, 11.

neither may be sectarian in origin. Moreover, the association of Elijah with the Interpreter of the Law in CD 7:18-19 hangs entirely on the mention of Damascus.[69] The proposal, however, is a fascinating one and has more to recommend it than the one that equates Elijah with the Moses-like prophet, especially if we take into account where the tradition about Elijah goes after this. The proposal cannot be ruled out entirely, yet I remain extraordinarily cautious about its correctness as far as the Dead Sea sect is concerned.

Conclusion

The Qumran community looked forward to the return of the prophet Elijah in the end-time, just prior to the "day of the Lord" or the inauguration of his kingdom. That much we know from the sect's use or readership of texts like 4Q558 and 4Q521. We also know that Elijah will be one of God's agents. He will not only act as a prophetic herald proclaiming the good news of redemption, but will also perform a number of miracles on the deity's behalf, such as healing the sick and raising the dead to life. In this respect, Elijah is the Lord's "messiah" whom both heaven and earth will obey. There is no clear evidence in the Scrolls to suggest that the eschatological Elijah was ever thought of as a priestly figure or identified with the messiah of Aaron. Likewise, nothing in the Scrolls points to an understanding of Elijah's future role as that of a teacher or interpreter of the Law. While these conceptions of the returning Elijah are quite prevalent in later

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[69] Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 114.

Jewish tradition, they seem to be lacking in the literature from the Dead Sea community. Whether or not Elijah is the "prophet" who is mentioned along with the messiahs of Aaron and Israel in the *Community Rule* (1QS 9:11) is impossible to say. Other scrolls allude to the coming of an end-time prophet who does not appear to be Elijah (e.g., 11QMelch). Thus the possibility of multiple eschatological prophets (just as there are multiple messiah-figures) in the Scrolls is, I think, a real one.

EPILOGUE

A Survey of Elijah in Later Jewish and Christian Literature

The foregoing study was devoted to describing and analyzing the understanding of the eschatological Elijah in the literature of the Second Temple period. In this closing epilogue, I will draw forward some of the Elijah motifs that were found in the books of Kings, Malachi, Ben Sira and the Dead Sea Scrolls in order to show the ongoing life of this tradition in the different settings of the early Christian and rabbinic writings. This epilogue is not intended to contain a full and comprehensive treatment of the Elijah tradition in the later Jewish and Christian literature. Its purpose is simply to highlight certain reverberations of the Elijah tradition outside of the Hebrew Bible and beyond that of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The themes that are presented in this epilogue have been dictated by the literature of the Second Temple period, and the sampling of rabbinic texts that follows is primarily drawn from the work of Louis Ginzberg on *The Legends of the Jews*.[1]

[1] See the section on Elijah in vol. 4 of Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 195-235.

Elijah in the Early Christian Writings

The earliest written texts after the Scrolls that have something to say about Elijah are the synoptic Gospels of the New Testament. Since there are relatively few references to Elijah overall in the New Testament, the following is a complete listing of those references:

1. Recalling Elijah's past deeds – Lk 9:54; Rom 11:2-4; Jas 5:17-18;
2. Elijah's ministry serves as a paradigm for Jesus' ministry – Lk 4:25-26; (cf. 7:11-16);
3. Elijah's presence at the transfiguration – Mk 9:2-8; Mt 17:1-8; Lk 9:28-36;
4. Popular opinion identifies Jesus as Elijah – Mk 6:14-15; 8:27-28; Mt 16:13-14; Lk 9:7-8, 18-19;
5. Jesus himself identifies John the Baptist as Elijah – Mk 9:11-13; Mt 11:13-14; 17:10-13; (cf. Lk 1:17; Jn 1:19-28);
6. The bystanders' misunderstanding of Jesus' cry from the cross – Mk 15:34-36; Mt 27:46-49.

The first set of texts deals with material from the Elijah narratives in the book of Kings. Luke 9:54 recalls the story about Elijah calling down fire from heaven to consume Ahaziah's men in 2 Kgs 1. Paul cites Elijah's complaint to God while on Mt. Horeb (1 Kgs 19:10, 14) in his letter to the Romans, and James emphasizes the effectiveness of Elijah's prayer to withhold/send rain (1 Kgs 17-18). The author of Luke's Gospel, in the second set of texts listed above, draws on the story of Elijah's aid to the widow of Zarephath and his resurrection of her son as a paradigm for Jesus' ministry.

The third set of texts is the account of the Transfiguration, which is found in all the synoptic Gospels. Just before the pericope wherein Jesus tells his disciples that the Son of Man will be raised from the dead, Jesus leads Peter,

James and John up a high mountain. There he is transfigured before them, with his clothes turning a dazzling white. The three disciples then witness Moses and Elijah speaking with Jesus, but they do not hear what is being said. Next, a cloud overshadows them and from the cloud comes a voice, "This is my son, the beloved; listen to him!" (cf. Deut 18:15). The disciples suddenly look around but they see no one except Jesus. The scene is certainly reminiscent of the theophanies experienced by Moses and Elijah on top of Sinai/Horeb. The appearances of Moses, the great lawgiver and founder of Israel, and Elijah, the prophetic restorer, signify that authority and power belong to Jesus. He alone represents the glory of God, the word of God, and the power of God's rule in the world.

According to the synoptic Gospels, it appears that Jesus was initially taken by some people to be Elijah. The Gospel of Mark, for example, reports that Jesus' name had become known to King Herod on account of his healing powers. Some people were saying that Jesus is John the Baptist raised from dead and this is the reason why these powers are at work in him. But others were saying that he is Elijah or a prophet "like one of the prophets of old" (Mk 6:14-15). The disciples of Jesus also heard these rumors, for when questioned by Jesus about who the people say that he is, they answer him with the same three possibilities: John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the ancient prophets (cf. Mk 8:27-28; Mt 16:13-14; Lk 9:18-19). The reason why some would have believed Jesus to be Elijah is because his words and actions coincided with their understanding of the earthly Elijah's role. He performed many miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead and multiplying food for the poor. These are all the hallmarks of the acts of Elijah according to the narratives in Kings.

The Gospels of Matthew and Mark have it, however, that Jesus identified John the Baptist as Elijah. In the pericope immediately following the Transfiguration, Jesus orders the three disciples to tell no one about what they had seen on the mountain "until after the Son of Man has risen from the dead" (Mk 9:9; Mt 17:9). Now this statement obviously confused the disciples, because they would not have expected the Son of Man to be resurrected or even to die in the first place. Moreover, Jesus' statement implies that the resurrection of the Son of Man is imminent. So they ask Jesus, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" Thoughts concerning the resurrection of the dead seem to trigger an association in the disciples' minds with Elijah, and more specifically, with Mal 3:23-24. The context of the Markan pericope indicates that Elijah must come before the "rising from the dead." The disciples seem to assume that the Son of Man's resurrection will accompany or trigger the resurrection of others, and that this more widespread resurrection will occur on the day of the Lord after Elijah's return.[2]

Jesus responds to the disciples' query: "Elijah is indeed coming first to restore all things" (Mk 9:12; Mt 17:11). Thus Elijah will not come just to restore the heart of fathers to sons or the heart of a man to his neighbor. He comes to restore "everything" (πάντα). It is difficult to know what this statement means exactly, but surely something on a grand and comprehensive scale is envisioned. Jesus affirms that Elijah is indeed going to effect some kind of universal

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[2] See Fitzmyer, "More about Elijah Coming First," 296, who suggests that Dan 12:2 might be part of thinking of Palestinian Jews who might query the relationship of the coming of Elijah before the day of the Lord in a context that has mentioned "rising from the dead." Also, Allison is incorrect here when he argues that the disciples' query has to do with the concept of Elijah coming before the Messiah ("Elijah Must Come First," 256). First of all, there is no reference to the coming of the Messiah in this passage; and secondly, Allison does not consider the contents of Mk 9:9-10, which begin the pericope and are essential to its interpretation.

restoration, though he seems to deny, on the other hand, that this restoration will take place before the Son of Man suffers, dies and is resurrected.[3] The pericope closes in Mk 9:13//Mt 17:12-13 with Jesus stating that Elijah has already come and suffered. The author of Mark's Gospel implies that this is a reference to John the Baptist, while the author of Matthew's Gospel makes this identification more explicit.

It is impossible to determine whether the historical Jesus did in fact believe that John the Baptist was Elijah; and the answer really is not important for our purposes. What is important to note is that this identification of John the Baptist as Elijah was strongly put forward by the synoptic Evangelists. The Gospel of Mark, the earliest of the four canonical Gospels, was written around the same time as the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple.[4] The text begins with a citation from the book of Isaiah: "Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths'" (Mk 1:2-3). It has long been pointed out that this is not a quotation from Isaiah, at least not the whole of it. It is a conflation of prophecies drawn from Exod 23:20, Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3. It should also be pointed out that Mark has followed the LXX in his wording of Isa 40:3. Whereas the Hebrew text reads: "A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,'" the LXX (and Mark) understand the verse

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[3] That Jesus affirms Elijah's coming and restoring all things is clear by the presence of the particle μέν. But Jesus seems to be denying (the καί before the πῶς having an adversative meaning, "yet") that this will take place before the passion of the Son of Man in v. 12: "Yet how [can it be that] it is written against the Son of Man in order that he may suffer much and be treated with contempt [if in fact Elijah, having come beforehand, restores all things]?" Or at the very least, Jesus is holding these two things that must and will occur in tension with each other.

[4] On the dating of the Gospel of Mark, see A. Y. Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel: Probings of Mark in Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 73-91.

differently. The voice that cries out is located in the wilderness according to the Greek version, rather than the voice crying out about the preparation of the way that is to take place in the wilderness as the Hebrew indicates.

The evangelist is not the first to link these three verses together, for the prophet Malachi had joined together Exod 23:20 and Isa 40:3 in his own oracle (Mal 3:1). In the book of Malachi the messenger who will prepare the way for the Lord is none other than Elijah. But immediately following the composite citation in Mk 1:2-3, John enters the scene as one "baptizing *in the wilderness*, proclaiming a baptism of *repentance* for the forgiveness of sins" (Mk 1:4). The implication, then, is that John the Baptist is the returning Elijah. His task is to renew the covenant relationship, which he does by baptizing those who have repented and are ready to change their ways. All of this is done in preparation for the imminent arrival of the kingdom of God. Lest the reader of Mark's gospel not realize after the initial verses that John is Elijah, further clues are quickly provided. The location of John's baptismal work is the river Jordan, the very place from whence Elijah was taken up into heaven. He also reportedly goes about clothed with camel's hair and wearing a leather belt around his waist, the same sort of garb that was worn by Elijah (Mk 1:5-6; cf. 2 Kgs 1:8; 2:11). The identification of John as Elijah is never stated explicitly in the Gospel of Mark and this is probably due to the author's rhetorical purpose of keeping the identity of Jesus as the Messiah a "secret." However, Matthew and Luke more boldly state the equation of these two persons, Elijah and John the Baptist (cf. Mt 11:10-15; Lk 1:17).

Concerning the sixth and final set of texts listed above, Jesus' cry from the cross is mistaken by some of the bystanders as a call for Elijah in both the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. Jesus cries out, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani,"

which are the opening words of Ps 22:1 in Aramaic. Someone in the crowd then rushes to fill a sponge with some sour wine and give it to Jesus to drink, because the bystanders hope to revive Jesus and prolong the ordeal in order to see if Elijah will come and take Jesus down from the cross. The later tradition of Elijah as helper of the righteous and the oppressed, which one encounters frequently in the rabbinic literature, may lie behind the bystanders' misunderstanding of Jesus' cry.

Before leaving the early Christian material, there are two other texts that deserve some attention. The first is Book 2 of the *Sibylline Oracles*, which is originally a Jewish work that probably comes from the late Second Temple period, but which shows the obvious signs of having been redacted by a Christian sometime between 70 CE and 150 CE.[5] The majority of Book 2 is an account of eschatological crises and the last judgment. Just prior to a description of the destruction of the world by fire, the judgment, and the resurrection of the dead, the coming of Elijah is mentioned: "Then the Thesbite, driving a heavenly chariot at full stretch from heaven, will come on earth and display three signs to the whole world, as life perishes" (lines 187-89). The text does not go on to say what the three signs are. Collins notes in reference to this passage an interesting verse from the *Didache*, an early work on Christian discipline: "And then shall appear the signs of the truth. First the sign spread out in heaven, then the sign of the trumpet, and thirdly the resurrection of the dead" (16:6).[6] There are also three "signs" associated with Elijah's coming in the very late midrashic work

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[5] On the dating and composition of this text, see J. J. Collins, "Sibylline Oracles," in *OTP* 1.330-34.

[6] Collins, "Sibylline Oracles," *OTP* 1.349.

known as the *Acts of Daniel*.[7] In this text the Messiah lets Elijah blow the *shofar* and on the first blast the primeval light of creation shines again. On the second blast the dead are resurrected and they come to the Messiah from all directions through the sky on eagles' wings. On the third blast, the *shekhinah* or the divine immanence reveals itself to the whole world. Whatever the three signs are in *Sib Or* 2, the role of Elijah here is clearly that of a prophetic herald announcing the end.

The other text is the Coptic *Apocalypse of Elijah*, which in its present form probably dates to the second half of the third century CE. The document is not an "apocalypse" at all, for it does not contain the account of secret lore revealed by an angelic messenger to Elijah, as one might expect. Instead, the general topic of the *Apocalypse of Elijah* involves deception and false leaders in the last days – how deception will manifest itself, how it will be exposed at the end, and how the righteous and the "saints" can expect vindication in an eschatological judgment and rest in a millennial paradise.[8] Elijah is mentioned only twice within the text, both times in the third person and in association with Enoch. In chapter 4 of the text, the martyrdom of Elijah and Enoch is described. The two figures return to earth as the "two witnesses" of Revelation 11 to condemn the Lawless One. He kills them, but they rise on the fourth day to declare their spiritual inviolability and the Adversary's impending doom (4:7-19). Then, near the end of the text, Enoch and Elijah return a second time to earth and kill the Adversary (5:30-32). The *Apocalypse of Elijah* doubles the eschatological return of

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[7] On this passage see A. Wiener, *The Prophet Elijah in the Development of Judaism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978) 67.

[8] D. Frankfurter, *Elijah in Upper Egypt. The Apocalypse of Elijah and Early Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 7.

Enoch and Elijah in a manner unique in early Christian literature. The death and resurrection of these two figures is also unique in the Christian tradition, for it is not attested in any of the Jewish sources.

Elijah in the Rabbinic Writings

The traditions about Elijah in the rabbinic corpus of writings are much too numerous and complex to be dealt with in any kind of systematic or comprehensive manner in this epilogue. In the ensuing pages, I have chosen to survey the continuations of three themes that we have encountered in the earlier Elijah material:

1. Elijah and eschatological reconciliation;
2. Elijah and the resurrection of the dead;
3. Elijah's zeal and his identification with Phinehas.

Elijah and Eschatological Reconciliation

The most prominent view of Elijah from the book of Malachi forward through the rest of the Second Temple period was that of herald of the end-time. He will announce the end and will reconcile the people with their God and/or with each other upon his return to earth, according to the prophecy in Mal 3:23-24. In an early *haggadah* recorded in both *Sifre Deuteronomy* and *Numbers Rabbah*, the passage from Song of Songs 7:5 is interpreted as follows:

> *'Thy nose is like the tower of Lebanon, which looks toward Damascus.'* This signifies that if you have fulfilled the Torah you may expect Elijah, to whom I said, *Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of*

> *Damascus* (1 Kgs 19:15) and of whom it says, *Remember ye the law of Moses my servant . . . Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet*, etc. (Mal 3:22ff.).[9]

The point of this midrash is that study of the Torah and the carrying out of its obligations produces salvation, or one might even say that Elijah's coming can be hastened through observance of the Torah. For if you have fulfilled the Torah (and so elevated it like a tower), you can expect or *'look toward'* salvation, which is indicated by the word "Damascus."[10] The return of the prophet Elijah is linked up with Song 7:5 through the presence of the word 'Damascus,' and the prerequisite of Torah observance for his arrival is indicated by the reference to the Torah of Moses in Mal 3:22.

Consider the following passage from the eighth or ninth century haggadic compilation *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*:

> R. Judah said: If Israel will not repent they will not be redeemed. Israel only repents because of distress, and because of oppression, and owing to exile, and because they have no sustenance. Israel does not repent quite sincerely until Elijah comes, as it is said, *Behold, I will send you Elijah . . . and he will turn the heart of fathers to sons, and the heart of sons to their fathers* (Mal 3:23-24)."[11]

R. Judah's reference to Mal 3:23-24 indicates that it is Elijah's duty in the end-time to get Israel to repent sincerely by "turning the hearts." A different understanding, or an expansion, of the Malachi prophecy emerged in the LXX translation of those final verses of the text. According to the Greek text, Elijah will "turn the heart of father to son and the heart of man to his neighbor." This rendering of the Malachi prophecy indicates that the LXX translator did not

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[9] *SifrDeut* § 41; *NumR* 14:4.

[10] See Chapter 4 of this study (pp. 196-97) on the importance of 'Damascus' as the future site of messianic events.

[11] *PRE* 43, at the end.

interpret Elijah's task as one of calling people to repentance. Rather the translator seems to have understood Mal 3:24 to be about personal relationships between family members. Elijah's role is then enlarged in scope to include the integrity of relationships between fellow Jews, for he will restore the heart of a man to his neighbor or "fellow-citizen." This view of Elijah as a reconciler of generations or as a family unifier or peacemaker is also present in the rabbinic literature.

There is a discussion among the earliest Tannaitic scholars with regard to the purpose of Elijah's future appearance. It is recorded in *m. 'Eduyot* 8.7:

> R. Joshua said: I have received as a tradition from *R. Yoḥanan b. Zakkai*, who heard from his teacher, and his teacher from his teacher, as a *halakhah* given to Moses from Sinai, that Elijah will not come to declare unclean or clean, to remove afar or to bring nigh, but to remove afar those that were brought nigh by violence and to bring nigh those that were removed afar by violence. The family of Beth Zerepha was in the land beyond Jordan and Ben Zion removed it afar by force. And yet another [family] was there, and Ben Zion brought it nigh by force. The like of these Elijah will come to declare unclean or clean, to remove afar or to bring nigh. R. Judah says: To bring nigh but not to remove afar. R. Simeon says: To bring agreement where there is matter for dispute. And the Sages say: Neither to remove afar nor to bring nigh, but to make peace in the world, as it is written, *Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet . . . and he shall turn the heart of fathers to sons and the heart of sons to their fathers.*

This rather complicated piece has to do with the issue of genealogical purity, for it is related to other mishnaic discussions on the topic.[12] *R. Yoḥanan's* statement shows that he regarded Elijah's mission to be the imposition of his authority on the violent men who, in matters of family lineage, had been accustomed to remove afar (i.e., declare invalid for marriage to a priest) and to bring nigh (i.e.,

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[12] Consult *m. 'Ed.* 8.3, which deals with R. Joshua's testimony that the widow of a man belonging to a family of doubtful purity was eligible for marriage to a priest. On these passages, see E. E. Urbach, *The Sages. Their Concepts and Beliefs* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1975) 298-99.

declare valid for marriage to a priest) arbitrarily. Elijah, according to *R. Yoḥanan*, will not come to make changes in the Law but only to make an end of this injustice involving the forceful and wrongful admission and rejection of families. Thus the Tanna interpreted Mal 3:24 as referring to the settling of questions of family and peace. R. Simeon's opinion is that Elijah will come to decide which of the disputing Sages is right or to reconcile disputes, while the majority view is that Elijah will come to make peace in the world. The LXX translator did not envision Elijah's peacemaking as extending beyond the Jewish people, but the Sages' opinion appears to be more universal in scope.

Related to this theme of eschatological reconciliation are those passages in the Mishnah and Talmuds that declare "let it remain until Elijah comes" or "when Elijah comes he will say," or even "this passage will be interpreted by Elijah in the future."[13] As Urbach comments, Elijah is not depicted as deciding between different opinions in these passages, but as revealing the true position with regard to a certain set of facts of which human beings have no knowledge.[14] In fact, Elijah is typically regarded as possessing a comprehensive knowledge of the Torah and of temporal facts which surpasses that of human beings. He is depicted as a revealer of knowledge and an interpreter of scripture both in the end-time and in the present-day life of the sages. Elijah is frequently characterized as having a very close relationship with many sages of the Talmudic period. He provides help to the sages when needed. He mediates between the heavenly 'house of study' and the rabbinic 'house of study,' through

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[13] E. g., *b. Ber.* 35c; *b. Shab.* 108a; *b. Pes.* 13a; 15a; 20a; 34a; *b. Men.* 45b. For other passages, see Ginzberg, *An Unknown Jewish Sect*, 212 n. 14.

[14] Urbach, *The Sages*, 301.

repeating 'below' what has been said 'above.'[15] He transmits messages between the scholars, reveals mistakes, resolves doubts, studies the Torah with them; if need be, he even provides them with material support, so that they may devote themselves to religious studies without worry.[16]

This image of Elijah as an interpreter of the law/revealer of knowledge is somewhat new in the later Jewish literature, for he was not characterized in quite this way in any source dating to the Second Temple period or earlier. However, there was the expectation among some Jews in the Second Temple period of a prophet who would come in some sort of authoritative capacity with respect to the law. In 1 Maccabees the priests do not know what to do about the stones of the Temple altar that had been defiled, so they decide to leave them on the Temple mount until a prophet should arise to tell them what to do with them (1 Macc 4:46; cf. 14:41). In the rulebooks from Qumran, the laws of the sect are to remain valid until the coming of a prophet and messiahs, at which time, presumably, a new set of laws will go into effect (cf. 1 QS 9:11). Perhaps the one who will "teach righteousness at the end of days" was believed by the sectarians to be a prophet as well (cf. CD 6:11). Whether the future prophet in either 1 Macc or the rulebooks from Qumran was identified with Elijah is entirely unclear and without evidence. But certainly by the Tannaitic period Elijah was understood as an authoritative voice on all matters relating to the law and its proper observance.

Finally, the theme of eschatological reconciliation in connection with Elijah may be found in the rabbinic sources in a couple of other ways. In the

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[15] *b. Hag.* 15b.

[16] See, respectively, *b. Erub.* 43a; *b. Shab.* 13a; *MidrPss* 36.8; *b. Baba Mez.* 114a. See also Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, for other passages.

literature of the Second Temple period, Elijah was depicted as God's agent for the end-time, as the final redemptive figure for the people before the day of YHWH comes. This view is also present in many rabbinic sources. Consider, for example, a passage from *Genesis Rabbah* 71.9:

> *And Leah said: Fortune has come* -- Ba Gad (Gen 30:11). The fortune of the world has come; he [Elijah] has come who will overthrow (*gadad*) the foundations of the heathen. The Rabbis debated: To which tribe did Elijah belong? . . . To Gad, for it says, *And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead* (1 Kgs 17:1).

We see a playful exegesis in this midrash on the word "gad," but the importance here is that the redemption of the world (i.e., the Jewish people) will come through Elijah, who will overthrow Gentile rule. In chapter 4 of *Pesiqta Rabbati*, it is said that Moses redeemed Israel from Egypt, but in the time-to-come, Elijah will redeem them. It is also said that "Elijah, after he will have redeemed them out of the fourth exile, out of Edom, they will not return and again be enslaved – theirs will be an eternal deliverance." In the *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* to Deut 30:4, Elijah is regarded as an eschatological redeemer along with the Messiah: "If your dispersed ones will be unto the end of the heavens, from there the Memra of the Lord your God shall gather you by the hand of Elijah, the high priest, and from there He shall bring you near by the hand of the King Messiah." Elijah will effect the ingathering of the exiles, while the Messiah will "bring them near." Both figures are expected and both will have a role to play in the coming redemption. Elsewhere Elijah functions simply as a herald or forerunner of the Messiah, as he does in the following passage from *Pesiqta Rabbati*:

> Another comment: *Sing and rejoice* . . . (Zech 2:14). When will this injunction be fulfilled? When the Holy One, blessed be He, redeems Israel. Three days before the Messiah comes, Elijah will come and stand upon the mountains of Israel, and weep and lament upon them, but then will say: Behold, O Land of Israel, how short a time before you cease to be a waste land, dry and desolate!

> Elijah's voice will be heard from world's end to world's end. And then he will say to the children of Israel: Peace has come to the world, as is said *Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that brings good tidings, that announces peace* (Nah 2:1) . . .[17]

Elijah and the Resurrection of the Dead

Another common motif that has appeared throughout the Elijah tradition is his ability to raise the dead, which is related to his role as a miracle worker or a healing figure. In 1 Kgs 17 the prophet revived a dead (or sick) child to life. Ben Sira 48:11 showed a connection between Elijah and the resurrection of the dead in the end-time. The text known as 4Q521 from Qumran depicted the eschatological Elijah as an anointed figure who will perform "the glorious things that have not taken place," healing the sick and giving life to the dead. In the Gospel of Mark, the disciples of Jesus seem to associate the resurrection of the dead with the day of the Lord and with Elijah's coming. For when Jesus tells them that the Son of Man will rise from the dead they ask, "why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"

In the rabbinic texts as well we find numerous passages to indicate that Elijah will be the agent of the resurrection in the end-time. There is a teaching attributed to R. Phinehas b. Yair, who was a contemporary of Rabbi (c. 200 CE) and son-in-law of R. Simeon b. Yohai, that names the various stages of the return which lead to the redemption. The teaching, as it is found in *m. Soṭah* 9.15, reads as follows:

> Heedfulness leads to cleanliness, cleanliness leads to abstinence, abstinence leads to purity, purity leads to holiness, holiness leads to

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[17] *Pes. Rabb.* 35.4.

> humility, humility leads to fear of sin, fear of sin leads to piety, piety leads to the holy spirit, the holy spirit leads to the resurrection of the dead, and the resurrection of the dead comes through Elijah.

The saying appears in numerous forms in the rabbinic corpus and occasionally with accompanying prooftexts.[18] Ezekiel 37:14 serves as the prooftext for that portion of the chain that states that 'the holy spirit leads to resurrection.' Although in its biblical context Ezek 37:14 deals with the redemption of the entire Jewish people, it was probably understood to refer to resurrection in general already by the rabbinic period.[19]

In the *Midrash on Psalms*, much of which certainly dates to the Talmudic period, Psalm 3:6 is expounded as follows:

> The congregation of Israel said: *I lie down*, away from prophecy; and *I sleep*, apart from the holy spirit; but *I awake* through Elijah, as is said *Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet* (Mal 3:23); *for the Lord sustains me*, through the lord Messiah.

The import of this midrash seems to be that the people of Israel have ignored (or are ignoring) the voice of the prophets that have been sent to them. Thus they have "died" and, in this state of "death," remain apart from the holy spirit. But when Elijah comes he will awaken them. This 'awakening' may be understood in one of two ways. One can take this passage to mean that either Elijah will resurrect the congregation of Israel from the dead or that he will lead them to repent, bringing them back to God and, hence, 'awakening' them to the holy

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[18] For parallel passages, see *j. Sheq.* 3.4; *j. Shab.* 1.5; *ShirR* I, 1.9; *MidrMisch* 81.

[19] See, for example, 4Q385 from Qumran, which contains one of the only clear references to resurrection in the Scrolls (the other being 4Q521). In frag. 2 of 4Q385, the vision of the dry bones in Ezek 37 is interpreted as predicting eschatological events. So it would seem that already by the time of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Ezek 37 was understood by some Jews at least to be describing the literal resurrection of the dead and not the metaphorical resurrection of the Jewish people. On this text from Qumran, see J. Strugnell and D. Dimant, "4Q Second Ezekiel," *RevQ* 3 (1988) 54-58.

spirit. Physically and/or spiritually, the Messiah will sustain them in the world-to-come.

It is said in *Pesiqta Rabbati*, a collection of sermons for the feasts and special Sabbaths, that the words in Qoh 3:15, "and that which is to be has already been," proves that God will raise the dead in the time-to-come. In response to the skeptics, God says: "Why do you have doubts as to whether I will be able to raise the dead? Have I not already raised the dead in this world – raised the dead by the hand of Elijah, by the hand of Elisha, and by the hand of Ezekiel?"[20] Similarly, in *Numbers Rabbah* 14.1 it is said of the phrase "Gilead is mine" from Ps 60:9:

> Sama son of Rakta expounded in the name of R. Simeon b. Lakish: God is the speaker and means, if a man should tell you that the dead will not come to life again, tell him that there is Elijah, who came from Gilead – as it says, *And Elijah the Tishbite, an inhabitant of Gilead said to Ahab* (1 Kgs 17:1) – and he can bear witness that by means of him I have already brought back to life in this world the dead son of the woman of Zarephath.

The message in both of these passages is that it is God who raised the dead in the past and it is God who will raise the dead in the future. Although Elijah was the agent through whom God resurrected the dead long ago, it does not state in these two texts that the prophet will also serve as God's agent in the end-time for the performance of this particular feat. However, Elijah was said to have performed the miracle of raising the dead even within the lifetime of the sages. When R. Joshua b. Levi was studying the Mekilta of R. Simeon b. *Yoḥai* and found himself slow to grasp a matter of law, Elijah went and summoned R. Simeon from the dead for R. Joshua to consult.[21]

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[20] *Pes. Rabb.* 48.2.

[21] *MidrPss* 36.8.

There also appears in the Talmuds and Midrashim stories or legends that tell of Elijah's help to individuals, especially the pious, in their time of need, and quite often the means by which Elijah provides assistance is miraculous. Elijah's role as a healing figure in the biblical narratives provided a precedent for these stories. One such story may be found in *Genesis Rabbah* 33.3 and 96.5. The following version is found in the latter passage:

> Our Teacher [R. Judah ha-Nasi] suffered a toothache for 13 years, during which time no woman died in childbirth in Eretz Israel and no woman miscarried in Eretz Israel.[22] At the end of 13 years our Teacher once became angry with R. Hiyya the Elder. Elijah of blessed memory visited our Teacher in the guise of R. Hiyya and laid his hand on his tooth, whereupon it was immediately cured. On the morrow R. Hiyya visited him and asked him how his tooth was. 'As soon as you put your hand on it yesterday it was cured,' he answered him. At that R. Hiyya exclaimed, 'Woe to you, ye women in childbirth and ye pregnant women in Eretz Israel. Nevertheless, it was not I who laid my hand on your tooth.' Our Teacher then understood that it had been Elijah of blessed memory, and from that moment on he began to show him honor.

Elijah performs essentially two miracles in this tale; he appears to R. Judah disguised as R. Hiyya, and he also heals R. Judah's toothache. Furthermore, Elijah's intervention restored peace between the two sages and led R. Judah to begin showing honor to R. Hiyya, which he did by seating him on the inner bench of the 'house of study' nearest to himself.

Another legend involving Elijah was recorded in the Babylonian Talmud in *b. Kiddushin* 40a:

> R. Kahana was selling baskets, when a certain matron made [immoral] demands upon him. Said he to her, 'I will first adorn myself.' He thereupon ascended and hurled himself from the roof towards earth, but Elijah came and caught him. 'You have troubled me [to come] 400 *parasangs*,' he reproved him. 'What caused me [to do it],' he retorted; 'is it not poverty (which forces me to go

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[22] The sufferings of the righteous were believed to protect their generation.

> hawking baskets among women)?' So he gave him a *shifa* [full] of *denarii*.

Once again, Elijah performs a miracle in order to help a pious sage. This time the miracle involved the prophet's flying to the scene and instantly catching the rabbi before he hits the ground. Elsewhere it is said that Elijah can appear on earth with four wingbeats and can move across it.[23] According to another view, he soars as an eagle above the face of the earth and observes the hidden activities of men.[24] But Elijah's aid does not end with catching R. Kahana in mid-flight. He also gives him enough money so that the rabbi will no longer have to sell baskets among the women and find himself in this sort of compromising situation again.

One further legend about Elijah and his miraculous deeds should suffice. In *b. Sanhedrin* 108d-109a we read:

> Nahum of Gamzu was accustomed whatever befell him to say, 'This too is good.'[25] It once happened that the Jews wished to send a gift to the Emperor. Said they, 'By whom shall we send it? We will send it by Nahum of Gamzu, who is well-versed in miracles.' On arriving at a certain inn, he wished to lodge there. 'What do you have with you,' they asked him? He replied, 'I am bearing tribute to the Emperor.' So they arose at night, untied his box, removed all its contents, and refilled it with earth. When he arrived there [in the Emperor's presence] it was found to be earth. 'The Jews mock me!' he exclaimed. So they led him out to execution. 'This too is for good,' said he. Then Elijah came, disguised as one of theirs [the Romans], and suggested to them, 'Perhaps this is the earth of Abraham, the Patriarch, who threw earth which turned to swords, and chaff which became arrows!' So they examined it, and found it to be even so: and a district that they had been unable to conquer, they threw this earth at it and conquered it. Thereupon they led him to the treasury and said to him, 'Take what you please!' So he filled his box with gold. On his

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[23] *b. Ber.* 4b; *MidrPss* 8.7.

[24] Tg. Koheleth 10.20.

[25] Cf. 2 Chr 28:18. "Gamzu" is always written in two words, זו גם, which taken by themselves, mean "this too."

> return, the inmates [of the inn where he had previously been robbed] asked him, 'What did you take to the king?' 'What I took away from here I carried there,' was his reply. So they took [the same] and brought it there, [as a result of which] these folk were executed.

In this tale Nahum is a righteous individual and one "well-versed in miracles" from Gamzu, a small town in southwestern Judea. Elijah's disguise as a Roman causes the following: it saves Nahum from execution, enables the Romans to capture a district that heretofore had been unconquerable, provides Nahum with wealth in gold, and leads to the punishment of the guilty robbers. Thus Elijah's miracle, while it might seem small or inconsequential, turns out to have a great effect on all involved. Elijah sets things right. The righteous are vindicated and the wicked are punished. On a side note, the power and strength of the Jews and their God is highlighted in this story over against the ineptness of the Roman Empire.

These kinds of legends are, of course, reminiscent of those in the book of Kings. Elijah's role as a miracle worker coincides with his role as an intercessor that helps individuals in need. Elijah is capable of coming to the aid of the pious and serving as a mediator between heaven and earth because he never experienced death. His heavenly existence permits him to function in miraculous ways in the everyday lives of the sages and to remain an active force in this world as well as in the world-to-come.

Elijah's Zeal and His Identification with Phinehas

In the Elijah narratives in the book of Kings, the prophet's zeal for God was expressed most clearly on Mt. Carmel, when he had opposed Israel's defection

from YHWH. Elijah voluntarily took on God's jealous anger and slew with his sword those Israelites serving as prophets of Baal. He also complained twice to God on Mt. Horeb about the people's idolatry – that they had forsaken the covenant, torn down YHWH-altars, and put YHWH-prophets to the sword. Later, Ben Sira praised Elijah for his zealous behavior (Sir 48:2), and the author of 1 Maccabees understood Elijah's ascension to heaven as God's special reward for his zeal for the Law (1 Macc 2:58). Elijah's characteristic zeal is reflected upon in later Jewish literature as well, sometimes positively and at other times, negatively.

Song of Songs Rabbah, an exegetical midrash that dates to around the middle of the sixth century, has this to say about the zeal of the biblical Elijah: "Elijah ought to have gone to the place in which his forefathers had stood [Horeb] and prayed for mercy for Israel; he did not do so." God therefore says to him reproachfully: "You have prayed for yourself, turn back."[26] According to another passage of that same midrash, God reprimands Elijah: "They have broken my covenant and not yours, destroyed my altars and not yours, killed my priests and not yours. Therefore how does it concern you?"[27] The ending of Elijah's prophetic mission is represented as divine punishment on account of his excess of zeal, for the phrase "anoint Elisha in your stead" was interpreted to mean, "I no longer want you as my prophet."[28]

In the collection of sayings attributed to R. Eliezer (*PRE* 29), God reproaches Elijah on Horeb:

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[26] *ShirR* I.6.

[27] *ShirR* I.39.

[28] *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael,* introduction to part Bo, p. 2.

> 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' (1 Kgs 19:9). He answered him: 'I have been very zealous' (v. 10). The Holy One, blessed be He said to him: 'You are always zealous! You were zealous in Shittim, on account of the immorality... Here you are zealous, too. By thy life!'

By way of Elijah's characteristic zeal he eventually came to be identified with Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, as the aforementioned passage indicates. God reproaches Elijah because he is "always zealous." Not only was he zealous when he slaughtered the 450 prophets of Baal, but he was also zealous at Shittim on account of the immorality. The incident at Shittim being referred to involved Phinehas in Numbers 25, not Elijah. There is some debate among scholars as to when the equation of these two persons originated.[29] Our earliest written source for this identification appears to be Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, an imaginative retelling of the history of Israel from Adam to David which dates to sometime around the end of the first century CE.[30] In *LAB* 48:1 we read:

> And in that time Phinehas laid himself down to die, and the Lord said to him, 'Behold you have passed the 120 years that have been established for every man. And now rise up and go from here and dwell in Danaben on the mountain and dwell there many years. And I will command my eagle, and he will nourish you there, and you will not come down to mankind until the time arrives and you be tested in that time; and you will shut up the heaven then, and by your mouth it will be opened up. And afterward you will be lifted up into the place where those who were before you were lifted up, and you will be there until I remember the world. Then I will make you all come, and you will taste what is death.'

Phinehas is identified with Elijah in this passage when he is commanded to dwell on a mountain and be nourished by an eagle, just like Elijah was nourished by ravens (cf. 1 Kgs 17:6), until the time comes when he will reappear as Elijah. He

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[29] See the discussion in Hengel, *The Zealots*, 162-68; and Hayward, "Phinehas – the Same is Elijah," 22-34.

[30] See D. J. Harrington, "Pseudo-Philo," in Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* 2.299.

will then shut up the heavens and afterward, be lifted up. He will reappear once again in the end-time, that is, when God "remembers the world." The whole process of equating Phinehas and Elijah came about because they are the only two who קִנֵּא, "are zealous," for God. But the identification might also have been made much easier by the fact that, after Phinehas' extraordinarily long career, the Hebrew scriptures have nothing at all to say about his death.[31]

The Palestinian *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* makes the identification of Phinehas with Elijah on more occasions than any other single source. Targum is a general name for a translation of the Hebrew Bible, or parts thereof, into Aramaic. The Targumim contain frequent exegetical expansions of the biblical text, from a few words to entire paragraphs, not found in the original. The *Targum Ps-J* is the most expansive of the Pentateuchal Targumim, being roughly twice the length of the original Hebrew text. It is a highly complex document that combines traditions from widely different periods, with some elements dating to as late as the Islamic period and others, perhaps as early as the second century BCE.[32] The account in Exod 4:13, when Moses pleads with God to send someone else to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, appears as follows in the *Targum Ps-J*: "And he [Moses] said, 'I beseech by the mercy from before you, O Lord, send your message by the hand of Phinehas, who is worthy to be sent at the end of days.'"[33] The equation of Phinehas and Elijah is made more explicit in the Targum on Exod 6:18: "He [Qohath] lived until he saw Phinehas; he is Elijah the

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[31] Phinehas is mentioned for the first time in Exod 6:25 and for the last time in Judg 20:28.

[32] On dating issues, see P. S. Alexander, "Targum, Targumim," in *ABD* 6.322.

[33] Note that in *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* (chap. 40) Moses' words in Exod 4:13 were understood to hint at Elijah. "'Send by the hand of him whom thou will send' (4:13) – that is to say, by the hand of the one whom thou will send in the future." Then Mal 3:23-24 is cited.

high priest who is to be sent to the exiles of Israel at the end of days." Elijah is called "the high priest" (כהנא רבא), for it is through his association with Phinehas that Elijah begins to take on priestly characteristics or to be understood as a priestly figure. The biblical Elijah did priestly things during his career, such as building an altar, offering sacrifices, and anointing kings (or at least, being commanded to anoint them). However, Elijah was never called a priest and he was not characterized as a priestly figure in the Kings/Chronicles material or in the Malachi prophecy, Ben Sira or the Dead Sea Scrolls. So what we have in the *Targum Ps-J* is new with respect to the Elijah tradition, and his role as eschatological high priest must be seen to derive in large part from his identification with Phinehas on account of their shared zeal.

Targum Ps-J on Num 25:12, the passage that refers to the covenant of eternal priesthood that God awarded to Phinehas and his descendants, is expounded as follows:

> With an oath say to him in My Name: Behold, I decree for him my covenant of peace, and I will make him the messenger of the covenant, and he shall live eternally to proclaim the news of the redemption at the end of days. Because men defamed him, saying: Is he not the son of Puti the Midianite? Behold, I will distinguish him by the high priesthood . . . and it shall be for him and for his sons after him an everlasting covenant of anointing, because he was zealous for his God and he made atonement for the Israelites.

The implicit equation of Phinehas and Elijah is revealed by the appeal to "the messenger of the covenant" from Mal 3:1 and the mention of Phinehas-Elijah's immortality and his return to earth at the end of days to proclaim the good news of salvation. The impetus for linking up Num 25:12-13 with Mal 3:1 actually seems to have come by way of another statement of the prophet Malachi, Mal 2:5, for we see the same linking up of passages in other midrashic sources.[34] In Mal

[34] *Numbers Rabbah* 21.3; and the section on Phinehas in the *Yalkut Shim'oni.*

2:5, God granted to Levi a covenant of life and peace (ברית שלום) just as he had granted to Phinehas. Levi is, of course, Phinehas' ancestor, so Malachi may have been extending the covenant of Phinehas, Aaron's grandson, to include all Levites. Mal 2:7 proclaims the recipient of this covenant of peace to be "the messenger of YHWH." Mal 3:1 prophesies the coming of YHWH's "messenger," who happens to be identified as Elijah in Mal 3:23. Through this rather complicated midrashic process, the two figures are equated.

The *Targum Ps-J* is also fond of applying to Elijah the task of redeeming the exiles. As we saw above, *Targum Ps-J* to Exod 6:18 states that Elijah is the high priest who will be sent at the end of days to the exiles. This is repeated in the Targum to Exod 40:10 and to Deut 30:4. The latter passage reads as follows: "Even though your dispersal will be to the ends of the heavens, from there will the Memra[35] of the Lord gather you through the mediation of Elijah, the high priest, and from there he will bring you near through the mediation of the King Messiah." We have already seen the ingathering of the exiles to be one of the eschatological Elijah's end-time duties in Sir 48:10. This is the first time that this task is understood as a priestly one, or that Elijah is at least called a priest in relation to this event. The *Targum Ps-J* appears to be unique in this respect.

Elijah's priestly lineage is declared in other rabbinic sources. The identification of Elijah with Phinehas was a popular tradition, and one that appears frequently in many rabbinic texts besides the Targumim. For example, there appears a legend in the Babylonian Talmud in *b. Baba Mezia* 114b. In this folktale, Rabbah b. Abbuha meets Elijah in a non-Jewish cemetery and begins asking him some questions pertaining to the law. After a short time passes,

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[35] From מימר, "word." *Memra* ("the Word") is used in the Targum to obviate anthropomorphism.

Rabbah says to Elijah: "Aren't you a priest? Why then do you stand in a cemetery?" (For a priest is forbidden to defile himself through contact with the dead.) Elijah replies: "Have you not studied the laws of purity? For it has been taught: R. Simeon b. *Yoḥai* said, 'The graves of Gentiles do not defile.'" Elsewhere, in *Pesiqta Rabbati* 4.2, Moses and Elijah are compared with each other and both are said to be prophets from the priestly tribe of Levi. It should be stressed that there is nothing in the Elijah narratives in the book of Kings that has anything to say about Elijah's tribal affiliations or his genealogy. Because Elijah is depicted as a "second Moses" in the Kings narratives, is the only one "zealous" for God like Phinehas, and does priest-like things throughout his earthly career, the association of the prophet with the tribe of Levi almost seems to make itself.

The legends about Elijah continue to grow throughout Jewish history. He is a prominent figure in much of Jewish folklore from the medieval to the modern period, and he especially comes to be associated with the traditions surrounding Havdalah and Passover. Elijah does not remain a very important figure in later Christian traditions and, presumably, this is due to the fact that the early church proclaimed that Elijah had already returned and appeared in the person of John the Baptist. But in the Jewish tradition, Elijah continues to be a prophet and a redeemer for the future, if not also an intercessor in the present-day lives of the pious and those in need.

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